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A  
DISSERTATION  
ON THE  
*Unreasonableness, Folly, and Danger*  
OF  
INFIDELITY;

Occasion'd by a late  
Virulent Book, intitul'd  
*A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons*  
OF THE  
Christian Religion.

---

By THEOTIMUS PHILALETHES. *m<sup>r</sup> Curh<sup>y</sup>.*

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Ἡ μεγάλη Νόσος τῆς Ψυχῆς ἡ Αθεΐα.

Herm. Trismeg.

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L O N D O N :

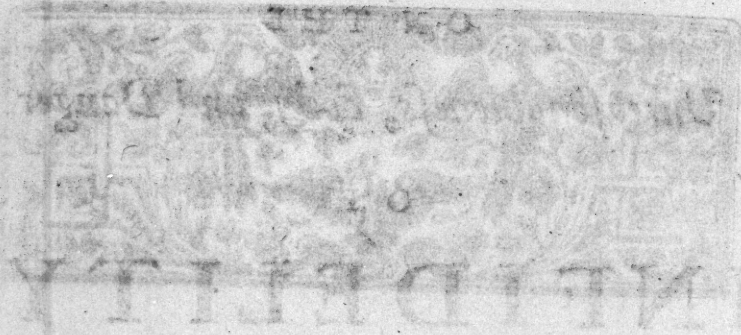
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DISSERTATION



MUSEVM  
BRITAN  
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# THE INTRODUCTION.



THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION has been very justly esteem'd by the Best and Wisest of Men in all Ages, from the Time of its first happy Plantation in the World, as the greatest Blessing on this Side Heaven: As it contains not only a sure Rule of Faith, but the most pure and perfect System of Divine Laws, every way suited to the Wants, Imperfections, and highest Improvement of Human Nature; to restore the only true Peace, Comfort, and Happiness of this Life, and secure

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the everlasting Blessedness of the Next: Whatsoever is agreeable to the purest Reason, and most highly Beneficial to Mankind; whatsoever Amiableness there is in Natural Religion; whatsoever Beauty, Harmony or intrinsic Worth is to be found in all other Pretensions or Appearances of Religion throughout the World, is compriz'd with the greatest Advantage in CHRISTIANITY. This gives us a clear Sight and Sense of the natural and contracted Impotence of our Intellectual Faculties, of the corrupt Bent of our Wills and Affections, and of our miserable Estrangement from GOD, the Eternal Fountain of Blessedness; directs and enables us to regain His Likeness, Approbation and Favour; acquaints us with the true and ultimate Felicity for which our Nature was design'd; together with the certain Means of attaining it; leads us to a compleat Propitiation for the Sins and Defilements of the Soul, and, as the Consequence thereof, to the most solid and unshaken Peace, and the choicest Supports under the various Calamities of this transitory Life: All which are far above the Reach, and infinitely surpass the most curious Searches of either  
Natural



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Natural or Moral Philosophy. In a Word : 'Tis a Religion which furnishes and enriches the Mind with the noblest Ideas; raises it above all the insipid and debasing Pleasures of Sense; imparts the clearest and most satisfactory Knowledge of the Divine Will, and sets before us the highest Motives to a steady, cheerful, and universal Obedience thereunto. Such is that invaluable Treasure which GOD has graciously vouchsaf'd to bestow upon Mankind in the Revelation of His blessed Will, for their present Comfort and Guidance in the sure Way to eternal Happiness: Having given them, *thro' his tender Mercy, the Knowledge of Salvation, by the Remission of their Sins; as a Light to those that sate in Darknes, and in the Shadow of Death, to guide their Feet into the Way of Peace* \*.

'T WAS with the highest Reason imaginable that the holy *Evangelist St. John* has assur'd us, *Grace and Truth came by JESUS CHRIST.* For if we fairly examine the Doctrine and Precepts of the Christian Institution, they will appear

\* Luke i. 77, 78, 79.

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pear in all Respects perfectly agreeable to the Reason, Understanding, Interest, Wishes, and Hopes of Mankind. They impart to us the most lovely and delightful Ideas of the Supreme BEING, as the eternal Fountain of Mercy and Goodness, of Justice, Truth and Holiness; as infinitely kind and propitious in all his Dealings with Reasonable Creatures; tender and careful for their Good; compassionate and beneficent in His Corrections; reconcileable after their Offences; and always ready to hear and answer their Supplications in Faith, and according to His reveal'd Will; yet impartially Just, in punishing all obstinate and finally impenitent Offenders. They afford the highest and most rational Encouragement to draw nigh to Him; to rely on the Truth and Certainty of His Promises; and to yield a ready, chearful, and unreserv'd Obedience to His Laws, whose Subjects we are by Creation, and by daily Dependance; and whose adopted Children we profess our selves by Christian Education, and by our own voluntary Choice and Assent. Was it possible for any higher Privileges to be confer'd on us, than the Freedom of an  
Access



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Access to Him under a Sense of our Wants; with an Assurance of His great Readiness, as well as Ability to supply them? Can any desire to receive His Benefits in an easier Way, than by asking for them in that most worthy and prevailing Name which He has directed and requir'd us to confide in? Or to have their Sins pardon'd on milder Terms than an humble and penitent Confession of them, joyned with effectual Endeavours to forsake them? Such are the merciful Conditions, and invaluable Privileges of the Gospel Covenant, universally offer'd to Mankind in JESUS CHRIST; thro' whom all Blessings, Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal are convey'd to those who thankfully and obediently believe in Him. Neither are those Christian Precepts which relate to our Fellow-Brethren, less to be valu'd or admir'd. What can be more just, and truly becoming a reasonable Mind, than that we should desire and delight in each others Good? That we should sincerely and tenderly love one another, as Partakers of the same common Nature, and Joynt-Heirsof the same glorious Hopes? That we should heartily sympathize with our Brethren in their



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their Afflictions and Sorrows, and be ready to afford them all the Help and Comfort we are able; not confining our Charity to those who are in the same Way of Thinking with our selves, or whom we judge to be well-affected towards us; but, according to the unlimited Goodness of our Divine Pattern, extending it to all, who do not evidently appear to have cut themselves off, by an avow'd and malicious Contempt, from all Hope in the Covenanted Mercies of GOD thro' JESUS CHRIST? Further, this most Amiable and Excellent Institution requires, That as we stand in continual Need of Forgiveness at GOD's Hands, our Resentments of private Injuries should be always mild and placable; attended with a Readiness to forgive, and a delightful Endeavour to disarm the Aggressors, and to win them over to a better Temper by Acts of Kindness and Good-will. What Tongue, or Pen, is sufficient to describe the heavenly Beauty, the transcendent Worth, and the incomparable Pleasure and Sweetness of that Divine Charity which the Blessed Author of our Holy Religion has in His own Person so eminently shewn, and so powerfully

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powerfully recommended to us. To what a noble Latitude does this tend to enlarge the Human Mind, beyond the narrow Sphere of Selfish and worldly Views, into an universal Care and Endeavour to please G O D ; to advance the Honour of His Name and Worship, and to promote the general Happiness of Mankind? To what an exalted Pitch of heavenly Wisdom, does this Emanation of the Blessed D E I T Y tend to raise the Minds of all those in whom it constantly resides, and is become a governing Principle! How pleasant, how secure, how amiable a Life might every one live, if they would but submit themselves to the happy Influences of it! And what a Paradise would this lower World once more become, if the pure and holy Precepts of the Christian Religion were universally predominant among Mankind! How excellent then must that Divine Doctrine be, which our Blessed S A V I O U R, the Prince of Peace and Love, has planted and establish'd in the World; since it brings down with it the Peace and Joy of Heaven, and is the only Means of raising us up thither! Certainly, these are very strong and undeniable Proofs to

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every



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every candid and unprejudic'd Mind, of the Divinity both of the Doctrine it self, and of Him who was the Blessed Author, Dispenser, and living Pattern of it. Till any of the thin and empty Notions, the bold Conjectures, and incoherent Systems of Human Invention, can frame out an Equivalent for such a solid and substantial Good, which is every way suited to procure the Happiness of this and the other World; 'tis to be hop'd none will be so infatuated as to make the miserable and fatal Exchange. Without this Divine Revelation, and the glorious Promises therein contain'd, which stand firmer than the Foundations of Heaven and Earth, the wisest of Men never could or can arrive at any more than obscure, wavering, and uncertain Hopes concerning a future State of Happiness and Immortality: Which, as it must needs add a weight to the Crosses and Calamities, so it naturally tends to pall the liveliest Sensations of Pleasure and Satisfaction in this Life. What an Height of Madness and Folly is it then, for those who are every Moment liable to lanch out into Eternity, to quit the only sure Anchor of Hope, for uncertain Con-  
jectures,



## *The Introduction.*      I I

jections, or faint Speculations; when the Certainty of eternal Blessedness, and the invisible Glories of the other World, is set before them in the clearest Light; and they have the fullest Assurance that a reasonable Mind can desire, of being perfectly happy in a joyful Re-union of Body and Soul; both from the gracious Promise of Him who is the eternal Fountain of Truth, and from the sure Pledge of His own Resurrection, when *He loosed the Bands of Death*, and openly triumph'd over the Power of the Grave! Such a Firmness of Hope, how lightly soever some may think of it, who chuse to wander in the Dark, after a mere *Ignis Fatuus* of their own Invention, is alone sufficient to compose the Mind into a calm and chearful Frame in every Condition of Life; to subject the Passions to the due Empire of Reason; to put a true Estimate upon all earthly Enjoyments; and to fix the Thoughts and Desires chiefly on Objects immutable and eternal; till that happy Dissolution, which we are every Day hastening towards, will fix us above all the Dangers and Vicissitudes of this World, in the Possession of perfect Blessedness,

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## 12 *The Introduction.*

fedness, boundless as our Wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

WHAT shall we say then to the pernicious and too growing Sect of our Modern *Deists*, or rather *Atheists* in Masquerade (tho' sheltering themselves under the general Name of *Christians*); who, not contented to quit their own Share in so inestimable a Blessing and Privilege, like the Apostate Spirits, seem to envy the Happiness of others; and with an indefatigable Diligence, labour to seduce them into the same desperate Infatuation! Who being puff'd up with an imaginary Infalibility in the Conduct of their own miserably deprav'd Reason, or (as St. Paul phrases it) *Spoil'd thro' Philosophy and vain Deceit*, audaciously strike at the very Foundation of *Reveal'd Religion*, and of all true Comfort and Happiness; endeavouring to subvert those Ancient *Pillars of Truth* laid by the infinitely Wise and Omniscient ARCHITECT, whose *Wisdom, Counsels and Ways*, as well as *Essence, are unsearchable*: Whilst under the specious Disguise of more refin'd Reasoning, or, as they love to term it,



it, a *freer Way of Thinking*, they would persuade us, after all that admirable Discovery of the Divine Wisdom, Goodness, and Love manifested in the *Sacred Writings*, and the clearest Illustration thereof, both to our Reason and Faith, in the Incarnation, Miracles, Doctrin, Life, Death, and Resurrection of our Blessed SAVIOUR, to quit those pure Springs of Heavenly Wisdom, Knowledge and Consolation; to vilify the Dignity and Prerogative of their Glorious Author; and to go back for safer or plainer Instructions to the Schools of *Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca*, or others of the ancient *Moralists*! The very Writings of those grave, judicious, and deep-thinking *Men*, who made a wise and faithful Improvement of the Advantages they enjoy'd, will sadly aggravate the Guilt and Condemnation of *these*, who pretend to have a very great Regard and an high Veneration for those Moral and Philosophical Discourses, which tho' valuable in themselves, were merely Human; and yet contemptuously reject the superior Authority and Usefulness of these special Divine Dictates, infinitely more Excellent and Beneficial in their Nature



Nature and Tendency, which G O D has condescended to afford them, as the sure Rule of their Faith and Practice, and the only Means of attaining their Ultimate End in everlasting Blessedness.

W H A T can be more deeply affecting, or more justly detestable to every serious and considerate Christian, than the affected Raillery of that despicable Sett of Men (if they may claim a Place among Reasonable Creatures) whose vile Excrements of Wit and infernal Sophistry are chiefly employ'd in Burlesquing the Divine Oracles, and turning the most Sacred Things into Ridicule? What can be more amazingly Horrible, and unbecoming an human Mind, than that those inexhaustible Springs of Divine Knowledge, Consolation and Hope, (the greatest Blessing of Heaven, next to the Happy Incarnation of our S A V I O U R, that was ever confer'd on the World) should be thought a fit Subject for the airy Brain of every conceited *Critic* to evaporate his Folly? The most dangerous Inroads to *Atheism* and Irreligion, have been in all Ages made by the greatest Pretenders to Reason, and never in Any, more than the Present ;

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Present; tho' not without the most palpable Abuse of that very Reason which they so much pretend to. 'Twas an unusual but politic Charge given of old — *To fight neither with Small nor Great, but only with the King of Israel*: So these bold Opponents, having studied the shortest Way, regard not any particular Denominations of Churches; but, like Men acted by a desperate Resolution, strike more home, even at the Root of all *Revealed Religion*; as the surest Way to cut off those numerous Branches at once. The grand Deceiver of Mankind, as *an Angel of Light*, has in every Age too successfully carried on his countermining Ends under the Mantle of an intemperate Zeal for some Exorbitancies and Superstructures in Religion; and so far prevailed on the unwarrantable Curiosity of some, as to change the very Substance of it for empty Notions, and mere speculative Opinions; but his most audacious Attempts to destroy both the Name and Essence of Christianity, he has, in a special manner reserv'd for the supine Carelessness, and palpable Degeneracy of the last Times. 'Tis no Wonder then, that he sets up the glaring Standard of *Reason*,  
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tho' miserably perverted and deprav'd, in Opposition to the *Reveal'd Will of GOD*; and ranges all his Forces under that plausible Covert, to overthrow the Authority of those *Inspir'd Writings*, tho' eminently distinguish'd by the very Stamp and Signature of Heaven; to ridicule and bear down the Sacred Ministerial Function; and to load all the positive Institutions of the *Christian Religion* with Indignity and Contempt. Many daring Efforts of this pernicious Tendency have appear'd among us; but of these, none so impious, so flagrant, and so highly detestable, as a late Book intitul'd, *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*: Wherein the Wretched Author, under the Mask of so specious a Title, and after an insinuating Plea for Universal Liberty of attacking the First Principles of all Religion both *Natural* and *Reveal'd*, (As if any Nation under Heaven had ever suffer'd what they esteem'd most Sacred and Inviolable, to be so wickedly trampled on) has with greater Rancor, and much less Fairness, than those old Enemies, *Celsus*, *Porphyrus*, *Trypho* and *Julian*, endeavour'd by impious Sneer and Banter, much more than  
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by solid Reasoning and Argument, to explode the whole System of CHRISTIANITY out of the World; without taking the least notice of the Learned and and Judicious Answers made long ago to those groundless Objections, which he has now maliciously reviv'd. The inveterate Prejudice, extream Weakness, Inconsistence, and false Reasoning, as well as the gross Impiety of this Performance, have been sufficiently expos'd by a *Right Reverend and very Learned Prelate*; to the Shame and utter Confusion of its *Author*, if he has any Remains of Right Reason or Ingenuity. After so horrid, and, as to the Degree of it, unprecedented an Essay to subvert the only Foundation of all true Happiness both Temporal and Eternal: He has distinguish'd himself as the worst of Public Enemies, as unworthy of the Benefits of Common Society, and as One deserving, in the worst Sense, to be esteem'd not only as a *Felo de se*, but *de Patria*, & *de Genere Humano*. I shall not therefore attempt, after so Great an Hand, to make particular Reflexions on the Work itself; but endeavour in the following Lines, to guard the Minds of Unwary and Well-

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meaning *Christians*, against the Danger of such pernicious Sentiments, under the Three general Heads of ATHEISM, DEISM and PRACTICAL INFIDELITY. If thro' the Divine Blessing, I may in some Degree, answer the excellent and laudable Design of Illustrating the Truth and Certainty, the Reasonableness and incomparable Advantages of the *Christian Religion*, to such as are yet willing to be convinc'd, and not wholly sunk into an irreconcilable Prejudice against it; I shall think a few spare Hours happily employ'd. But, as to Those, who have bid an utter Defiance to all Reasonable Conviction, and are resolv'd to believe Nothing that contradicts the wild and extravagant Notions which they have either form'd to themselves, or greedily imbib'd from others; there is no Hope of doing them any Good without a Miracle: since it is but just that the Supreme BEING, whose Mercy and Goodness, in the establish'd Means and Method of Salvation, they have so audaciously and wilfully despis'd, should give them over to a Judicial Hardness of Heart.

UNDER

UNDER the second Head of DEISM which was chiefly aim'd at, and is most enlarg'd upon, I have, in several Places made some Use of a Learned *Author* or two; yet not so, as to need or bear any particular Quotation. This I thought my self oblig'd to acknowledge: having no other Views than to be serviceable to the Blessed Ends of that Holy Religion, which is the common Property, as well as the highest Privilege of every Good Christian; and which it behoves them to defend, with at least as much Zeal and Firmness of Resolution, as they would their Temporal Free-hold Estates.



Of



# The Introduction

Under the second head of Division  
which was chiefly standard, and is not  
though I have in several places  
made some use of a standard, and as  
two, and not up as to need of being any  
particular standard. This I thought  
myself obliged to do, and I have  
not only done so, but to be consistent  
to the standard of the High Hall.  
The work is not a mere history, as  
well as a history, but a history of every  
kind of work, and which it behooves  
every one to know, and which is more  
than any other work of the kind, as they  
will find it in the history.



## Of ATHEISM.



**A**N Acknowledgment of One Supreme, Eternal, Self-Existent, Infinitely Wise and Glorious BEING, as the Omnipotent Creator, Gracious Preserver, Sovereign Ruler; First Cause, and Ultimate End of all Things; with the necessary Consequence, of such Moral Duties as are peculiar to Reasonable Creatures, *viz.* Humility, Dependence, awful Fear, Praise and Adoration; is the very first Lesson of Nature, whensoever it begins to make any true Step towards its Recovery; and bears even Date with the World it self. Neither was it ever yet confin'd to any particular Nation, or People; but has been, in some Degree,

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in all Ages diffus'd thro' every Part of the World; as the most faithful *Historians* and accurate *Travellers* of unsuspected Integrity, have unanimously aver'd. None of them could ever yet out-travel the Notion of a DEITY; nor the Exercise of some Kind of religious Worship, as the Result thereof. Indeed, among the most savage and unpolish'd People, those Apprehensions have been less clear, and accompany'd with many wild Extravagancies in their imaginary Devotions: But, among the more civiliz'd, inquisitive and thinking Part of Mankind, tho' unacquainted with the extraordinary Blessing of *Divine Revelation*, there have not been wanting some, in every Age, who have given very full and exemplary Proof of that Great and Fundamental Principle in *Natural Religion*. Therefore this, which appears so deep-rooted in Human Nature, or rather so inseparable from it, and can so justly plead the earliest Antiquity, the most uninterrupted Succession, and the most universal Consent of Mankind, ought, with the greatest Reason, to be acknowledg'd as a Self-evident Principle, and a most certain and uncontrovertible Truth:

Truth : Since there can be no more powerful, convincing Evidence of a DEITY, antecedent to all created Beings, than that which is so legibly written in every Man's Heart.

THE Author of that excellent Epistle to the *Hebrews* has plac'd the Foundation of all Religion in a firm Belief of the Being and Attributes of GOD ; particularly, that of His Providential Care and Distributive Justice. Whosoever will have Recourse to Him in a Way of religious Adoration, must believe first, *that He is*, and then, *that He is a Rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him* \*. Neither do the Sacred Writings only, but innumerable others, of Men eminent for Learning, Sobriety and Justness of Thought, among the *Heathen* World, lay down these as first Principles, infallibly sure, and interwoven with the Frame and Constitution of every Rational Being : And the Connexion between these two is so firm and inseparable, that the Latter is unavoidably prov'd by the Former. For, if we admit that there is a GOD, who made and governs all Things

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\* Heb. xi. 6.



by His Infinite Wisdom, Power and Providence; the necessary Consequence will be, that His Justice and Holiness are engag'd in the recompensing of those Creatures whom He has endu'd with a Liberty of Choice, and a Power of Self-determination, as they shall have deserv'd well or ill at His Hands.

To insist or enlarge upon such plain and Self-evident Truths, might seem altogether needless, and little less than a Disparagement to the sober Sense and Reason of Mankind; if the late unprecedented Growth of Infidelity, and the daring Attacks which have been made upon the Fundamentals of all Religion, both *Natural* and *Reveal'd*, did not justify, or rather indeed require frequent Remembrances of this Nature, to preserve the Minds of many well-meaning, but less discerning Persons, from so Dangerous a Contagion; artfully cover'd over with a painted Shew of Rational Argument, tho' in Reality having nothing at all to support it.

WHOSOEVER will but allow himself to consider seriously, and with Reflexions becoming



becoming a Reasonable Mind, on the wonderful Frame of the Terrestrial World, which has been born up so many Thousand Years in the midst of Water, without any Pillars or Basis of its own; on the Beauty, Order and Oeconomy of it; the numberless Parts of which it consists; and the Continuation of all Creatures, Animal, Vegetative and Mineral, in their distinct Kinds; with the peculiar Natures, Properties, and Usefulness of them; must needs acknowledge it to be the Product of an infinitely, Wise and Almighty AGENT; and cannot but discern the lively Characters of His Adorable Perfections, so plain that the meanest Capacities may easily read them. To view and contemplate the manifold Works of Creation and Providence, will (as *St. Paul* \* argues) necessarily raise the Minds of Men to an awful Apprehension and religious Acknowledgment of the *Ἀόρατα*, or *Invisible Things of GOD*, even his eternal Power and Deity; and to an Obedience proportionable to such Knowledge; *i. e.* to a becoming Reverence of Him as the Highest Good, and to the Exercise of those

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\* Rom. i. 20.

Moral Vertues towards each other, which are agreeable to His Holy Nature and Will : And so far as they fall short in the Improvement of this single Talent, the common Light or Law of Nature, they will be left, as he infers, ἀναπολόγητοι, altogether inexcusable. If we look upward to the great Body of Light, which displays it self thro' the visible Part of the heavenly World ; and consider its glorious Lustre, its comforting Warmth, and necessary Influence on this lower Orb, to actuate, enliven and assist it in the great Variety of Natural Productions, for the Benefit and Delight of Mankind . If we view the other great Luminary of Heaven, with the numberless Train of ornamental Stars and Planets, whose Motions are vastly different, unequal, and yet so regular, as not to obstruct each other in their stated Course ; we cannot but admire, and religiously acknowledge, with the divine Psalmist, *That the Heavens declare the Glory of GOD, and the Firmament sheweth His Handy-work* \*.

IF we look yet nearer home, and duly consider

\* Psal. xix. .1.

consider the admirable Composition of our own Bodies ; in the exact Symmetry and mutual good Offices of their numerous Parts ; the due Temperament, and peculiar Usefulness of the various Fluids ; the impulsive Energy, and orderly Distribution of the most exquisitely fine and imperceptible Spirits ; and all happily contributing to feed and cherish the tender Lamp of Life ; can we forbear joyning with the same *Psalmist*, in that rapturous Acknowledgment, *I will praise thee, O GOD, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made : marvellous are Thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth right well* \*. The many Wonders in Human Nature joyntly agree to demonstrate their Great Original ; and ought to assist us in our contemplative Enquiries after Him *in whom we live, and move, and have our Being* †. But that which tends, above all, to raise and heighten our thankful Admiration, and obedient Dependence upon GOD, as the Highest Good, and the Eternal Fountain of Blessedness, is, a serious and becoming Observation of that more sublime and capacious Part of Man, the Immortal Soul, wherein

\* Psal. cxxxix. 14.

† Acts xvii. 27.



wherein he bears the nearest Resemblance of his Almighty CREATOR. From the great Compass of its Thoughts; the boundless Extent of its Desires; and the vastness of its Capacity, in Considering, Examining, Recollecting, Contriving, Reasoning, Comprehending what is past, present, and to come; forming Ideas of invisible Things, and reaching after more suitable Objects than the whole Creation affords; what Inference can be more clear and natural, than, That there is One, Only Perfect, most Glorious and Infinite BEING, the immense Fountain of Life, Wisdom, Power and Goodness, who is every way sufficient to fill and satisfy its most enlarg'd Desires? For, if Man be really endu'd, as most certainly he is, with a Capacity of Desiring and Enjoying a greater Good than what is merely suited to his Corporeal or Sensitive Part; 'tis highly reasonable, even to a Demonstration, to conclude, both that there is such a Supreme Good, and that this most desirable Object, so suited to his Intellectual Faculties, is attainable: Otherwise, there would be a kind of Vacuity or Defect in the most excellent Part of the Creation.

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THE Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality is very ancient ; and was, in a manner, generally acknowledg'd by the most Learned and truly Great Men among the Old Philosophers : Some of which have enlarg'd upon it with very fine and excellent Notions ; sufficient to shame, as they will certainly at last condemn a Modern Sett of the most Vile and Degenerate Wretches, whose affected Pride and Arrogance, or rather Slavery to sensual Appetites, has sunk them into a State of Insensibility, and an utter Rejection of every Thing which is not suited to their corrupt Taste ; tho' they enjoy the highest Advantages of Improvement in Divine Knowledge. Unhappy Men ! who, out of a partial Fondness for their new-invented Notions (which they are pleas'd to call a Freer Way of Thinking) agreeable to the Licentious Course which they have chosen, tho' utterly inconsistent and contradictory, take a great deal of Pains to undo themselves and others ! Who snarl at the Gracious Hand which would lead them into the sure Way to Eternal Life ; and wilfully shut their Eyes, not only against the brighter

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Beams of Divine Revelation, but against the very Light of Nature, the Dictates of Reason and Conscience, and whatsoever distinguishes Mankind from the Lower Rank of Sensitive Creatures. As to those sincere and unprejudic'd *Heathen* Writers; their Arguments for the Immortality or Eternal Duration of the Soul in a future State, were not only just, but clear, strong and invincible; namely, from its being an immaterial Substance, and independent on the mortal and corruptible Body: Such, as can exert its Operations when the other is asleep, and appears no better than a warm Carcass; and is often most active, clear, and vigorous, when the earthly Tabernacle which imprisons it, is feeble and decaying. They likewise argu'd for its incorruptible Nature, from its noble Aspirations, and insatiable Thirst after Divine Wisdom; as being infinitely superior to all bodily Pleasures, or any other sensible Objects. From whence they justly infer'd, That some more excellent and adequate Satisfaction is prepar'd for this sublimer Part of Man, in another World; and that this will be so perfect, so truly amiable, and every way sufficient



cient to its compleat Happiness, that all Wisdom and Knowledge, and whatsoever creates perfect Love, Satisfaction and Joy, shall be its peculiar Portion and Reward; wherein it shall delight and rest it self for ever. *Plato*, in particular, upon a full Examination of the various Opinions concerning the final Happiness of Mankind, declar'd, " That No-  
 " thing in this Life was or could be our  
 " Chief Good; because it is insufficient  
 " to satisfy the proper Desires of the  
 " Human Soul : † " And further, in the same excellent Book, he says, That  
 " this Happiness consists in being inse-  
 " parably united to G O D ; which is the  
 " highest End and Consummation of all  
 " Blessedness ". Thus *Seneca*, speaking of *Scipio Africanus*, expresses a Confidence, " That his Soul was return'd to  
 " Heaven, from whence it came: || "  
 And in his Consolatory Epistle to *Marcia*, he says, " The Soul being set at Liberty,  
 " ascends to its Divine Origin: " Which perfectly agrees with *Solomon's* Assertion, That *when the Dust shall return to its native Earth, the Spirit shall ascend to G O D who gave it \**. If the Soul

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† In Phædon.

|| Ep. 86.

\* Eccl. xii. 7.

## 32 Of Atheism.

therefore, be thus Immortal, and design'd for an Happiness suitable to its Nature and Capacity, He must needs be Eternal, Unchangeable, and the Onely Fountain of Blessedness, who made it so: Nor can it ever attain its true End, but by returning to that Divine Bosom from whence it came, upon quitting the present Clogs of Sin and Mortality.

FOR, to what Purpose should the Soul bring with it those innate Impressions of a DEITY into the World? Or, why should it, at any Time, when freest from the Croud and Hurry of worldly Thoughts, and the strong Impulses of the Sensitive Appetite, exert it self in the most evident Divine Inclinations, in pious, ardent, and sensible Aspirations towards an unseen Felicity; if there were no Reserve of *Endless Pleasures, and Fulness of Joy* \*, in the Glorious Presence, and *at the Right Hand of Him*, who is the Unchangeable Author of its Being? To what Purpose should it derive its Origin from an immediate Divine Infusion, (which, was acknowledg'd by Learned Heathen Writers, many Ages before the Appearance of Christianity)

\* Psal. xvi. 11.

Christianity) and not from the same Sensitive Spirits which form'd the Animal Souls of Beasts, Fowls, Fishes, &c. if, like theirs, it was only design'd to actuate the sluggish Organs for a very short Time, and then return to Corruption? And why should it be rais'd to a sublimer Height, by the most powerfully affecting, and insuperable Impressions of Immortality? Or, what Advantage could accrue from its surviving the corruptible Body; if there was not an Eternal BEING, whose Infinite Perfections and Communicable Attributes are every way suited to the utmost Extent of its Desires and Capacity? Of what Use could those inbred Notions of Good and Evil, of Virtue and Vice, of Rewards and Punishments, which are inseparable from a Rational Soul (as is evident from common Experience, as well as the numberless Testimonies of Ancient *Moralists*) be reasonably thought: Or, how can we reconcile the different Dispensations of Divine Providence in this World; if there were not a Supreme Tribunal, and an Infallible, Omniscient Judge, who will most certainly pass a righteous Sentence upon all Persons and Actions? That, Justice



Justice, Benignity, Temperance, and all Kinds of Moral Vertues, appear infinitely more Amiable than dishonest, sordid or vicious Practices, to every unbiass'd Mind, when Reason has resum'd its proper Sovereignty over the disorder'd Passions; is a very strong Argument, that the Soul is of an heavenly Extraction, and not only deriv'd its Being from an inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness, but still retains some indelible Characters of its Blessed Original.

AND yet, after all, 'tis very questionable, Whether there ever was any such Monster in Nature, as a serious, close-thinking or speculative *Atheist*; who liv'd and died so, in the clear Exercise of his Reason and Senses. The most of those Few among the Ancients who were reputed such, did much more contemn and disown a Deity in their Practice, than they were willing or forward to declare it in Opinion. Nothing in the world could be so difficult as to say or write any Thing plausible in Defence of the latter; when the Voice of Nature, and the general Sense of Mankind was against them. They were Men swallow'd up in Sensuality;

suality; which went a great Way towards a total Extinction of every Spark of Divine Light, both from Reason and Conscience: So that they might be truly said (in the Scripture Phrase) *to live without GOD in the World* \*; having made a *God of their Belly*, and given themselves up entirely to the *minding of earthly Things* †. Nevertheless, 'tis observ'd by *Lactantius* ||, of these very Persons, That tho' in the Time of Health and Ease, whilst they could swim in the soft Stream of sensual Pleasures, they were averse to the Acknowledgment of a Supreme BEING; yet, in Extremity of Distress or Danger, and especially under the shocking Apprehensions of Death, they were usually as forward as other Persons, in acknowledging His Power and Sovereignty, and in calling upon Him for Mercy and Deliverance. It would be very easy to collect many Modern Instances of the like Nature; *i. e.* of Men, under the same Circumstance, equally affected with Horror and Remorse, and imploring the Divine Mercy, with the greatest Intenseness of Mind; whose former Gaiety, quickness of Parts, and eager

\* Eph. ii. 12. † Phil. iii. 19. || Institut. lib. III.



ger Indulgence of their sensual Appetites, had long carry'd them into a contemptuous ridiculing of all Religion, and fix'd upon them the odious Character of profess'd *Atheists*, in the Judgment of the World.

NOTHING is more certain, than that there is a natural Disposition, or at least an irresistible Impulse, even in the worst of Men, to acknowledge a DEITY, whensoever they will give way to serious Thought; and that this will often break thro' the strongest Endeavours to stifle and suppress it. The Terror and abject Behaviour of *Caligula*, and others remarkable for their extremely dissolute Lives, in Times of great Distress or Surprise; is a lively Proof, that the natural Sense of Religion which Men bring with them into the World, is rather smother'd and forcibly born down, than wholly extinct; and that 'tis liable to be rouz'd up in them again, when a Sense of great and imminent Danger, and the Stings of a guilty Conscience, represent to them the just Terrors of that Divine Vengeance which they have incurr'd. And indeed, the numerous Convictions,  
and

and self-condemning Reflexions of Persons reputed Atheistical, tho', for the most part, sudden and extorted, are a more substantial Proof of a DEITY, and a future Judgment, than the nicest Philosophical Reasoning: For this is purely the Voice of Nature and Conscience let loose upon them, and wholly stript of their former artful Disguises and Evasions. In Times of great Extremity, Men commonly speak the true Sentiments of their Souls; having laid aside that Vanity and Ambition, that Hypocrisy and Dissimulation, whereby they had before deceiv'd themselves, and endeavour'd to deceive others, in their inveterate Opposition to Sacred Things, so long as Health and Ease, Liberty and Wantonness had embolden'd them.

BUT not to insist peremptorily on what the Divine *Plato* thought very probable, viz. "That all Mankind sooner or later, have some sensible and satisfactory Apprehensions of a Supreme and Infinite BEING:" And supposing that there may have been, or may yet be, some few Exceptions from that general Rule; some Men so exceedingly harden'd in their

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Stupidity,

Stupidity, as never to have had any discernible Impressions on their Conscience, or any awful Belief of a DEITY throughout the whole Course of their Lives: Yet this preternatural Stupor would be no more a fair or reasonable Proof, that Conscience is not a general Divine Gift, and a substantial Witness of a Supreme BEING, implanted in Human Nature, than, either the congenite Want of Reason in Idiots, or the prodigious Sottishness or distracting Frenzy which accidentally destroys that noble Qualification in some others, can be a fair Argument to prove, that Reason is not a common or general Principle in Men. 'Tis on very good Grounds therefore, that the holy *Psalmist* pronounces that Man a *Fool*, i. e. defective or distemper'd in his Reason, who says, *in his Heart*, or entertains the least Imagination, *that there is no GOD*.

So that it is not only probable, but evident, beyond Contradiction, That the spreading Infection of Atheistical Sentiments, arises much more from the wilful and desperate Wickedness of Mens Lives, than from Speculation, or any serious and deliberate Way of Thinking.  
For,



For, when Men are once come to a Resolution against submitting themselves to the Holy Rules, and Awful Restraints of Religion, 'tis almost natural for them to form out a Sett of Notions, or pretended Principles, suitable to their Conduct; that they may appear to act with some Consistency, or at least to brave it out with the World. But, whether these are sufficient to give them an uninterrupted Quiet, during the forc'd Gaiety of their Spirits, without fleeing often from themselves, and drowning the clamorous Checks of an evil Conscience in a perpetual Circle of Diversions, Business, Drinking, &c. is very much to be question'd. However, generally speaking, GOD is pleas'd, some Time or other, before they go off the present Stage of Action, to let them know that He will not always be mock'd; and usually gives them a Foretaste of His just Vengeance, by terrible Convictions of the fatal Cheat which they have put upon themselves: In so much, that very Few, however they have liv'd, if they die in their Senses, pass their last Moments in a State of Unbelief. The Soul, being then ready to lanch out into Eternity, and disengag'd

from its former Clogs of Flesh and sensual Pleasures, has a clear and reflexive View of it self, and of the Actions which it has produc'd; and needs no Arguments to prove that Invisible Things are the greatest Realities, and their Importance answerable to their eternal Duration: So that they will be terribly convinc'd of the Falsity of those fond Notions, strain'd Probabilities, and pernicious Sentiments which they had form'd for their Support; and fully assur'd, beyond all Sceptical Doubting, That there is a GOD; That the Revelation of His Holy Will to Mankind is most certainly true; That they have Immortal Beings, incapable of Extinction; That the short Time of their Continuance in this World, was a Probation for Eternity; and that there will be a Righteous and Universal Judgment, which they cannot escape.

PRIDE and Vanity, joyn'd with an Affectation of calling every Thing into Question which they do not like; and, above all, an unbounded Gratification of Brutal Appetites; may, and too often do, violently bear down the nobler Dictates of Reason and Conscience, and  
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cause Men to become wholly immers'd in the Life of Sense, or (as *St. Paul* expresses it) \* *given up to vile Affections*; so as to bid an utter Defiance to all Virtue and substantial Goodness, and not only to condemn those Amiable Habits in others, but endeavour, as far as possible, to laugh them out of the World; till at last they provoke the Righteous God to give them up intirely to a judicial Hardness of Heart. He will not always bear with the reproachful Indignities of wretched Worms, who are more vile and despicable than those which they daily tread on; and whom He can every Moment frown into Nothing. If a long continu'd Course of His Goodness and Forbearance, of His Warnings, Solicitations, Mercies and Judgments, will not prevail to soften them into a better Temper; if they will proceed to blaspheme His Holy Name, and trample on His Honour in the most tender Points, by affronting Religion, aspersing His Righteous Ways, and vilifying His Sacred Word, Institutions and Worship; He will at last give them up to their own Delusions, that they may † *be filthy still*, and settled in the wilful Hardness

\* Rom. i. 26.

† Rev. xxii. 11.



Hardness and Impenitence of their own Hearts: Which is the heaviest Judgment, on this Side Hell, that can possibly be inflicted on Reasonable Creatures. Nor can the Severity of such Proceedings in any Measure derogate from those Glorious Attributes of His general Goodness and Mercy; For, since Men contemptuously resist both the Light of Nature and of Divine Revelation, what can be more just than for the Sovereign Dispenser, to take away their neglected Talents, and suffer them to sink beneath that Reason which they have so grossly abus'd? Thus the Divine Honour, breaking thro' the usual Methods of Long-suffering and Patience, has often eminently vindicated it self in the public View of the World; and loudly refuted all Atheistical Principles and Practices, by the utter Confusion, Horror, Madness and Self-execution of their most Daring Abettors.

ATHEISM, consider'd strictly as a Negative, implies no less than a Privation of solid Reason and good Judgment, and an obstinate Resistance of the universal Dictates of Natural Religion; with

with all the dreadful and necessary Consequents : And, as it surpasses any positive Definition ; so it does, in some Degree, the Behaviour of the very Apostate Spirits ; who, whilst they have cast off all Duty and Allegiance to their Sovereign Ruler, retain with Horror, an unavoidable Acknowledgment of His Eternal Being and irresistible Power. In vain therefore, does proud Man, an helpless and dependent Worm, breath out his blasphemous Affronts against Omnipotence, and presume to contend with his infinitely Glorious Creator, and Merciful Preserver ; by out-braving His Justice, and the Terrors of His Wrath, and impiously despising both the unparallel'd Love and inestimable Merits of the Blessed REDEEMER ; with the Excellent Precepts of that Holy Religion instituted by Him. Tho' the Supreme Governor of all Things, in the usual Course of His Providence, consigns over such Daring Miscreants to the Dreadful Tribunal of the Last Day ; yet they are always within his Reach, and not only liable to be crush'd in pieces every Moment they live, but sometimes in the very Height of their execrable Defiance, visibly mark'd  
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out as Tremendous Monuments of the Divine Vengeance, and of Caution to others. Happy, thrice Happy would it be, if every One who has taken any of the Dangerous Steps towards so deplorable a State, would be persuaded to make a speedy and timely Retreat; to Consider, Repent, *and do no more so wickedly*; to lay hold on the Sceptre of Grace whilst it is yet extended towards them; and by an Obedient Faith in the atoning Merits of that One All-sufficient Sacrifice which was offer'd up for the the Reconciliation of Mankind, to obtain a full and perfect Remission of their Sins, and be Partakers of that Everlasting Salvation which He has so wonderfully purchas'd.







## Of DEISM.



THE Character of an ATHEIST sounds so harsh and odious, and appears so contrary to the general Sense of Mankind, that Few or None are willing to lie under so infamous a Censure : Therefore such as make no Scruple to bid fairest for it, have endeavour'd, of late Years more especially, to palliate the Matter, under the softer Name of DEISTS; tho', in Reality the Difference is very small. They are willing to acknowledge a Supreme and Eternal BEING; to whom all Creatures, endu'd with Reason and Understanding, are accountable for their Actions: But, as to the Authority and Obligations of *Reveal'd Religion*, and especially that Glo-

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ous System of it, manifested by the Gospel Dispensation; they desire to be excus'd from testifying their Belief or Assent: This is \* *the Stone of Stumbling, and the Rock of Offence*, which they cannot get over. Among *These*, who are not only Numerous, but Active to propagate their Sentiments, it must be acknowledg'd, that some are Persons of an unblemish'd Character, in respect of any gross Immoralities: Nevertheless, in as much as they enjoy, and wilfully reject the clear Revelation of the Blessed and only *Medium* of their Reconciliation and Acceptance with GOD, which is the greatest Instance of the Divine Love that ever was manifested to Mankind, and resign themselves, for safer Guidance, to the dim Light of Nature, in Opposition thereunto; 'tis difficult to determine whether their sad and deplorable Case, be in any Measure Better than that of the openly avow'd or profess'd *Atheist*. Their wilful Obstinacy and unreasonable Prejudices would be easily conquer'd, if they would but allow themselves to examine and consider what the Holy Scriptures have reveal'd concerning

\* 1 Pet. ii. 8.

ing GOD, and the Oeconomy of Man's Salvation, with the same Candor and Fairness, with the same Impartiality, and sincere Disposition to be rightly inform'd, which they themselves would plead for, in Matters of infinitely less Concernment; Or, if they would but solemnly appeal to their own Hearts, whether Pride, Passion, Affectation of Novelty, and an overvaluing Opinion of the Strength and Conduct of their own deprav'd Reason, be not at the Bottom of all their Scruples. What Error can be more absurd, than to make the narrow Mind of Man the only Measure of all Things, both Human and Divine? To deny or reject supernatural Truths, because they do not in every Respect agree with our present Conceptions, which we are too partially fond of; is not only against Faith, but against Reason too; which, when it appears Brightest, will not stick to acknowledge its own Imperfection. So that 'tis as absurd for Reason to reject a Divine Testimony on that account, and violate its sacred Regard and Subserviency to Faith; as it would be, for the Inferior Senses to contradict the clearest Principles of Reason. Miserable Men! who affect to be witty and



subtil, by cavilling with the Only Light which can lead them to Eternal Happiness, or *wresting it* perversely to *their own Destruction* \*: As if a Rebel, or other Capital Malefactor, who lay under a just Sentence of Condemnation, and was liable every Moment to the Execution of it, should quarrel with, and obstinately refuse the Gracious Offer of a Pardon from his injur'd Sovereign, only because it was not drawn up in a Form exactly agreeable to his own particular Fancy ! Invincible Ignorance may indeed admit of great Palliation : But when the Error of the Mind proceeds from a corrupt and perverse Will, both are highly sinful, and altogether inexcusable. This was *the great Condemnation* †, which lay so heavy upon the Obstinate *Jews* : They thought they knew enough, and were in a safe Way, therefore *would not come* to the Fountain of Divine Wisdom, *that they might have Life* ||. Hence it is, that St. Paul assigns *an evil Heart* to be the principal Cause of Unbelief \*\*: And it may, without Breach of Charity, be affirm'd, That Pride, Perverseness of Mind, and

\* 2 Pet. iii. 16. † Joh. iii. 19. || Ib. v. 40.

\*\* Heb. iii. 12.

and the Love of Sin, are the most prevailing Reason why so many reject both the Belief and Practice of that Heavenly Doctrine by which they should be fav'd.

THE transcendent Purity, inestimable Worth, and compleat Sufficiency of the GOSPEL Revelation, to answer all the Ends of Man's Present and Eternal Happiness, will appear in the truest Light, by comparing it with the dark and ignorant State of the *Heathen* World, as to the true Knowledge of GOD, and a Conformity to His Holy Will; and likewise, with the Insufficiency and Imperfection of the *Jewish* Religion. The only Helps in these important Matters, which the *Former* enjoy'd, were the Light of Nature and Human Traditions: Both which were defective and insufficient to answer the End propos'd. For the *One* was very uncertain and obscure in it self, as well as easily over-power'd by Sensual Appetites and Favourite Passions, or lost in the Mists of Prejudice from Education and the Prevalence of Evil Customs: And the *Other*, viz. Traditional Knowledge, beside its own inseparable Defects, was altogether



together corrupted by adulterate Mixtures of fond impure and vile Superstitions : So that, not only the Generality of Mankind remain'd in this sad Condition, but the most Inquisitive and Learned among them, who endeavour'd, by all possible Improvement of their Reason, to raise themselves from such a State of Ignorance into a Pursuit of the Supreme Good, could at Best arrive at but very low and unsatisfactory Attainments therein. For the most Part, after their earnest Enquiries, their restless Studies, and eager Disputations, they produc'd little more than irreconcilable Differences of Opinion, and almost as great Uncertainties as when they began. Some of them ran into down-right *Scepticism*; and took a Pride in Doubting, or questioning of all Things. Very Few, if any, arriv'd higher than at probable Conjectures, or such unsteady Notions as were not effectual to produce in any eminent Degree, a Practice suitable to the true Dignity of Human Nature; to the Duty which GOD requires from all Reasonable Beings; and to the Capacity wherewith He has endu'd them for promoting his Glory, and their own Happiness.



Happiness. After all their elaborate Searches, the *Apostle* observes that *their foolish Hearts were darken'd*; so darken'd, that they could not discern what it chiefly concern'd them to know: And he further adds, That *the World by Wisdom, i. e. by their fond Attainments in Speculative Knowledge, knew not GOD*. Accordingly, he found the Doctrine of *Faith in CHRIST Crucify'd*, no where so universally oppos'd as at *Athens*, the chief Nursery of Learning and Science. Nor is it at all strange, that such a Doctrine, which was eminently founded in Humility, should be altogether unacceptable to Men who valu'd themselves chiefly upon their Attainments in Studies that were suited to the Advancement of their Reputation and Fortunes in this World. They probably expected some new and curious Discoveries in Natural or Moral Philosophy; and that a Teacher pretending to Divine Authority, should have instructed them in some Deep Speculations about the Nature and First Principles of Things: But an History of of the Life Doctrine and Miracles of JESUS CHRIST, and especially of His Death, Resurrection and Ascension, together

together with a Few plain Rules of Life, which tended to mortify the natural Pride and Vanity of Mens Minds, and to fit them for a future Happiness; was too flat and insipid for Persons of so refin'd a Taste, and consequently rejected as not deserving their Notice or Examination. This therefore being the Best of the Natural State of Mankind, whilst destitute of the Divine Conduct and Assistance, a superior Light, to guide them under this Darkness, and to bring them out of it, was absolutely necessary. For, tho' the mere Improvements of Reason were sufficient to give Men some Sense of their own Corruption and Defilements, and possibly to lead them to some general Considerations of the Mercy and Goodness of GOD, joyn'd with obscure Hopes, that upon Amendment of Life, their Sins may be forgiven; yet it could never lead them to the Knowledge of that Cleansing Fountain which GOD has graciously provided for that Happy End. So that this at most would still leave them under many disquieting Doubts and Fears about that important Matter: And this probably gave Rise to those superstitious Sacrifices, for appeasing

ing the offended DEITY, which the most Religious among the *Heathens* had recourse to.

IF we consider the State and Circumstances of the *Jewish* Religion, which receiv'd its Birth from the Revelation and special Appointment of GOD Himself, and consequently was Holy Just and Good, and every way worthy of its Supreme Author: Yet it will bear no Proportion in its Nature and Usefulness, to that clear universal and most encouraging Dispensation which we are under; wherein the exhaustless Treasures of Divine Grace and Truth are convey'd to Mankind by JESUS CHRIST. For, the Precepts and whole Oeconomy of that Religion were neither of universal Extent, nor suited to the general Necessities of Mankind; but in a special Manner limited to that particular Nation, and appointed to be observ'd by them no longer (except as to the *Moral* Injunctions, which are the unchangeable Laws of Nature) than till the Accomplishment of that Great and Universal Promise of the *Messiah*; who was the End and Substance of all those Shadows, the

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*Desire Hope and Expectation of all Nations*, and reserv'd as the last and greatest Gift of G O D, to impart His Saving Benefits indiscriminately to Mankind. The Divine Favour to that particular Nation was indeed eminently Great and Distinguishing; in so much that the Holy *Psalmist*, speaking of it, says, *He sheweth His Word unto Jacob, His Statutes and His Judgments unto Israel: He hath not dealt so with any Nation* \*.— Yet these were but as the First Glimmerings of Light, in comparison of that Meridian Brightness which should afterwards, at the proper and appointed Season, break forth to enlighten the whole World. That Body of Divine Laws, transmitted to them by the Hands of *Moses*, consisted, for the most part, in Low External and Ceremonious Observances; which were, at the Best, but Shadows of a more perfect and spiritual Dispensation, and in themselves had but little Tendency to purify the Conscience, and to exalt the Mind and Affections into a Frame fit for the Exercises of internal Piety, and the more elevated and spiritual Duties of Religion. Yet these were suited

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\* Psal. clxvii. 19, 20.

to the Temper Disposition and Capacities of that Nation; who, according to Sacred Testimony, were a People very unwise and inconsiderate, proud unconstant froward and untractable. Being therefore altogether unfit for more deep and perfect Instruction, GOD was pleas'd to deal with them in Great Wisdom, by those low and servile Institutions, which St. Paul terms \* *weak and beggarly Elements*, or Rudiments of Knowledge and Discipline suited to mean and weak Capacities; that they might serve *as a Schoolmaster*, to prepare them for an Higher and more Excellent Dispensation; when that Great Prophet whom Moses had foretold, should appear on Earth, to reveal unto Mankind in general, a more perfect Rule of Faith and Worship; agreeable to the unlimited Mercy and Goodness of GOD, and to the universal Necessities of Mankind: Which should consist chiefly in the internal Habits of Reverence and Gratitude, of Love and Charity, of Peace Truth Righteousness and universal Goodness. Near the Times of that happy and long-expected Appearance of the † *Prince of Peace*, to gather

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and

\* Gal. iv. 9.

† Isa. ix. 6.

and unite all Nations in the true Faith  
Fear Love and Worship of GOD, He was  
graciously pleas'd to impart some clearer  
Manifestations of Light and Comfort to  
His Select People of the *Jewish* Race ; by  
the special Instructions of the *Prophets*,  
and Holy Men rais'd up among them-  
selves thro' His own immediate Impulse  
and Commission. By *These*, they were  
frequently instructed in a more perfect  
Knowledge of the Divine Will ; and as-  
sur'd that GOD had but little Regard  
to the outward and Ceremonious Ob-  
servance of His own Precepts, unless it  
were accompanied with real and inward  
Purity of Heart, and the constant Prac-  
tice of all Moral Vertues : That He  
principally requir'd of them the substan-  
tial Duties of an Holy Love, and Re-  
verence towards Himself and Submis-  
sion to His Will ; of strict Justice Mer-  
cy and Charity towards their Neigh-  
bours, and of Truth Fidelity Meekness  
Patience and Temperance in their whole  
Conversation. By those inspir'd *Messen-  
gers*, they were also further acquainted  
with GOD's gracious Intentions towards  
them ; and that He would pardon their  
manifold Transgressions against His Righ-  
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teous Laws, upon their unfeign'd Repentance and Amendment of Life: That He would \* *make a New* and more merciful *Covenant with them*, very different from that which He had establish'd with their Fore-fathers; not to be written on Tables of Stone, but imprinted on their Hearts: That the Time was drawing nigh, wherein He † *would gather to Himself a People of all Nations and Tongues, and they should see His Glory*: That || *the Mountain of His House should be exalted; and all Nations should flow, or resort to it, to learn His Will, and to walk in His Ways*: — That the Blessed *Messiah* should appear, \*\* *to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness*: — That \*\*\* *the Redeemer should come to Sion*; — †† *the Messenger of the Covenant, whom they waited for*; — ††† *The Desire and Delight of all Nations*; — And |||| *from the Rising of the Sun, to the going down thereof, His Name should be great among the Gentiles*; — And more particularly That \* *He who*  
was

\* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33. † Isa. lxvi. 18.

|| Mic. iv. 1, 2. \*\* Dan. ix. 24.

\*\*\* Isa. lix. 20. †† Mal. iii. 1. ††† Hag. ii. 7.

|||| Mal. i. 11. \* Mic. v. 2.

*was to be the Ruler in Israel, whose Goings forth were from Everlasting, should arise out of Bethlehem.*— Thus, the Dawnings of Divine Light were, in some Measure display'd before-hand to the *Jewish* People; sufficient, if they had not been unaccountably perverse, to have prepar'd them for a worthy and becoming Reception of that Higher and more perfect Revelation of the Divine Will, in the purer State and Times of the *Gospel Church*: Whereby the exceeding Riches of God's infinite Wisdom and Love, and the clearer Hopes of a Blessed Immortality and Eternal Glory, were brought to Light.

BUT if we take a View of that bright and glorious Scene which the *Evangelical Doctrine* it self has laid open to Mankind, both as to the Nature and Excellency of its Benefits, and the universal Extent of them; we shall find it every way amiable attractive and delightful, beyond all Comparison, and above the highest Elegancy of Expression; perfectly agreeable to the infinite Wisdom Mercy and Goodness of the Supreme BEING, and to the Miseries Wants Imperfections,

perfections, and even the most exalted Wishes and Hopes of Intelligent Creatures. A *Doctrine*, which has clearly reveal'd to us much more than the Light of Nature, or the *Mosaical* Institutions, could ever have done, concerning the incomprehensible Essence and Glorious Attributes of the Almighty, and His delightful Propension to confer Pardon Peace Consolation and Eternal Happiness on Mankind; under the most mild and merciful Conditions, not only practicable, but easy and pleasant in themselves! A *Doctrine*, founded in Love and Pity; full of Condescension and Goodness; and of the sweetest Encouragement and Hope; suited to the present frail and fallen State of Human Nature; and, in every respect, worthy of the infinite and adorable Perfections of its Divine *Author*; as it tends to restore them to a State of Purity, resembling the Moral Rectitude of the Supreme and Eternal Mind! For, if we consider the whole Human Race, as involv'd in Guilt, and at Enmity with GOD; they cannot but be expos'd to many anxious and perplexing Fears, with regard to that Future and everlasting State, which their immortal Souls must unavoidably



unavoidably enter upon at the laying down of these frail and perishing Bodies. Whensoever they consider seriously, they must needs be sensible that *they have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of GOD*; and that the numberless Offences of their whole Lives will lie upon them as an insupportable Weight, which no Future Obedience, if they could attain to it in never so great Perfection, can possibly atone for: So that without the Sovereign Mercy of that infinite BEING, whom they have so grievously offended, they must bear the inevitable Guilt and Punishment to Eternity. In this deplorable Case, their Reason and Conscience, which is the Voice of Nature, can afford but little Comfort; or, at Best, no solid and satisfactory Hope, from any general Notions of the Divine Mercy and Goodness: So that the Mind, being variously exercis'd between the two contrary Passions of Hope and Despair, is altogether at a Loss where to fix it self. 'Tis but a natural Consequence, that this should extinguish all solid Peace and Joy; and both damp and enfeeble all the active Powers of the Soul in its most vigorous Endeavours of Amendment; so long as  
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the Success appears doubtful, and the Acceptance of such Endeavours uncertain. This tends to cool all good and pious Affections towards the Supreme and Infinite BEING, whom they are conscious of having highly displeas'd, and yet dare not rely upon Him for Reconciliation. Now, under this weak and helpless State, we are assur'd, That *Grace and Truth have been sent*, or manifested to the World, thro' JESUS CHRIST: *Grace* or Favour, to free them from the Guilt of Sin, and from the condemning Power of the Divine Law; and *Truth*, to guide direct and establish them in the Way of Peace and Holiness. By the infinite Value of His own all-sufficient Sacrifice, He has deliver'd all those who obediently believe in him, from the Sentence of Eternal Death; and by His perfect Obedience, He has purchas'd for them both Pardon and Peace, Reconciliation and Acceptance with GOD. In *Him*, the sacred Harmony of the Divine Attributes is eminently exalted and display'd to Mankind; so that Justice and Holiness, *Mercy and Truth have met together*; and *Righteousness Joy and Peace have kissed each other*. As an Almighty

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Mediator,

*Mediator*, He has made up the vast and inexpressible Breach between GOD and Man; and as a prevailing *Advocate* and continual *Intercessor*, He has encourag'd them to approach the Throne of Divine Grace, in an humble Confidence, or rather with a full Assurance of *finding Mercy, and Grace to help in Time of Need*. This is the Sum of that great *Evangelical Covenant*, which the Eternal *Son of GOD*, on the Behalf of Mankind, procur'd by His Almighty Intercession; purchas'd by the infinite Merits of His Obedience Sufferings and Death; has solemnly ratify'd and seal'd by the Blessed *Sacraments* instituted in His Church; and by the Evangelical Ministry has publish'd and universally recommended to the World: So that there is no room to doubt of its full Accomplishment on GOD's Part to all those who with a true Faith and a willing Obedience, submit themselves to the easy and merciful Terms of it.

ALL Mankind are naturally in the Condition represented by our Blessed SAVIOUR under the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*. They have gone astray from their



their *Father's* House; unwilling to subject themselves to His provident Care Wisdom and Guidance; and have sought after an imaginary Pleasure and Satisfaction in the wild restless and extravagant Rambles of their own Invention: But, being touch'd with a lively Sense of their rash Conduct, thro' many stinging Disappointments in the Pursuit of such a sordid and licentious Course of Life, they call to Mind the true Pleasure and Happiness which they once enjoy'd, and might have continu'd in, under His *Fatherly* Care and Government. This makes them desirous of returning to Him, tho' in the meanest Station imaginable: Yet, being fill'd with anxious Fears, from the deep Impressions of Guilt and Unworthiness, they can scarce hope for a kind Reception, after such provoking Ingratitude and Disobedience. But the Event is far otherwise; Their compassionate *Father*, meets them a far off; prevents their melting Acknowledgments with his Goodness, and receives them with the highest Demonstrations of endearing Kindness and Pity. Thus, *GOD*, *having so loved the World, as to give His Only-begotten Son*, to be a

Propitiation on their Behalf, has remov'd all those Fears which are the natural Consequents of Sin and Guilt; and declar'd Himself not only reconcileable, but more willing to forgive than we can be, to ask it of Him. In the whole Course of the Blessed *Messiah's* Manifestation and Converse on Earth, He has clearly reveal'd to us the merciful Design of the Almighty and Supreme BEING to repair the Ruins and compleat the Happiness of Human Nature; together with the Way and Means of effecting it. His Holy Life and Doctrine was One continu'd Instruction to Mankind, in their Duty towards GOD, themselves, and one another. He has freed them from the heavy Yoke of burthensom Ceremonies and costly Sacrifices; and establish'd, in the room of it, such a perfect System of Holy Precepts as is not only agreeable to their Reason and Understanding, but the happiest Provision that could possibly be made for the true Peace of their Minds, the Comfort of their Lives, and every Branch of mutual Happiness in this World. He has not deny'd them the Use or Enjoyment of any Thing but what is really evil and destructive to them. He has consider'd  
their

their manifold Temptations; makes gracious allowances for their daily Infirmities; and through the infinite Merits of His atoning Sacrifice and Obedience, imparts an enhancing Value to their best and sincerest Endeavours in His Service, tho' far short of absolute Perfection: So that the Excellency and Advantage of His Laws are as strong a Motive to the Observance of them, as the Divine Authority by which they were enacted. Lest any Discouragement or Remissness should arise on Man's Part, He has further graciously promis'd to every humble Suppliant the powerful and continual Aids of His Holy Spirit, to strengthen their faithful Endeavours, and *make them fruitful in every good Work*. And, to crown all, He has given them a clear and full Assurance of the most glorious Reward hereafter, in perfect and everlasting Blessedness, infinitely disproportion'd to the best of their Services, and surpassing the highest Ideas of any Mortal Beings in this World. From all which, 'tis abundantly evident that no Kind of Rational Motives or Encouragements to the Love and Practice of Religion, have been wanting in that gracious and inestimable



estimable Revelation of the Divine Will by JESUS CHRIST: Wherein He has taken away all room for *Scepticism* and *Infidelity*; having given the most strong and undeniable Proofs of His Divine Wisdom and Power, by the transcendent Purity and Efficacy of His Doctrine; by the many unquestionable Miracles which He wrought; by the voluntary Sufferings He sustain'd; by His Resurrection from the Dead, at the precise Time which He had fix'd; by His visible Ascension into Heaven, to take Possession in the Human Nature, of that Eternal Glory which He has purchas'd for us; by His Mediatory Office, as *the Propitiation for our Sins*; and by His continu'd Care in protecting and governing His Church; sending *Labourers into His Harvest*; and blessing their faithful Endeavours to promote the happy Ends of the GOSPEL, which is *the Power of GOD unto Salvation*, to all them that believe and obey it. But, if neither Reason nor Arguments will convince, nor the strongest Obligations prevail; if neither the most gracious Promises, nor the severest Threatnings, nor Interest, nor Self-Love, nor any of those Considerations which usually  
sway

sway Men in other Matters, will at all move them in *This*; which is of greater Moment than all other Things in the World; they must perish, and that most deservedly as well as irrecoverably. How abandon'd then, to the worst of Impiety; how utterly destitute of all Reason and Goodness, of every Spark of Humanity and Gratitude, and of all Sense of Duty and Interest, must *They* be, who contemptuously vilify and reject the Free Offers of such inestimable Benefits! Who maliciously turn against the Gracious and Omnipotent Hand, which would rescue them from Eternal Wrath! Who make it their chief Study, by all unworthy, Artifices, to calumniate and disparage the Supreme Fountain of Truth and Holiness, in the tenderest Points of His Honour, Wisdom and Veracity; and not only trample on the highest Instance of Mercy and Goodness which Reasonable Beings, endu'd with an Immortal Nature, are capable of, but strenuously endeavour to frustrate the Blessed Ends and Happy Influences of it, in respect of others! Such Men, however they may at present *glory in their Shame*, or think it a Point of Bravery to have stiff'd the Dictates

Dictates of Reason and Conscience, and to laugh at the very Notion of Religion, are really as void of all Manly Understanding, as they are of Vertue Civility and good Manners; and having made themselves the Bane of Human Society, have no Injustice done them, if they become the general Scorn and Aversion of Mankind.

HAD such miserable and unhappy Persons always liv'd and convers'd in those Barbarous Nations which never enjoy'd any Other Means of Divine Knowledge than the Dictates of their own Minds, and what was deducible thereby from the Works of Creation and Providence; their Case had been infinitely safer. The Law and Light of Nature had then been the only Rule and Measure of their Conduct: And their final Approbation or Condemnation, would have turn'd solely upon the Observance or Violation of those Natural Dictates of their own Reason and Conscience: For GOD's Expectation of Obedient Returns from that Noble Rank of Beings whom He has endu'd with Reason, and a Power of Self-determination,  
is



is always proportion'd to the Means and Advantages which He has afforded them. But when *He, who at First commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, has vouchsafed to give Men the much clearer Knowledge of His Glory in the Face of JESUS CHRIST \**; when He has reveal'd to them the Sacred Harmony of His Glorious Attributes, in the Wonderful Design of Man's Redemption; and the only adequate Means for the Expiation of their Guilt, and the compleat Sanctification of their Nature, in order to the Attainment of that Blessed End; their Case becomes vastly different. To shut their Eyes wilfully against the clearest and the most perfect Revelation of His infinite Goodness and Love to Mankind; and to turn their Backs upon those Gracious Offers of Pardon and Reconciliation; is no less than to despise the greatest Instance of His Wisdom and Grace, and *to reject the deep Counsels of His Holy Will against themselves †*. Such was the Obstinacy of the proud *Pharisees*; which set them at a greater Distance from the Kingdom of GOD, and from the Benefits of CHRIST's

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\* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Luke vii. 30. Acts xiii. 46.

Redemption, than the more loose and profligate Multitude, who pretended to little or no Sense of Religion. And the Reason of this is both evident and very strong: For, if the Blood of CHRIST, which was shed for the Expiation of the Sins of Men, is of such Efficacy, when apply'd by Faith, and Obedience to the Evangelical Precepts, as to answer perfectly that Great and most Gracious Design; the same most Precious and Invaluable Blood, when rejected by Unbelief and final Impenitence, must needs bring upon them a much heavier Weight of Guilt than all the other Sins which they have committed. No Condition in this World can be more Dangerous and truly Miserable than theirs, who, under the Enjoyment of the highest Advantages for the perfect Knowledge and Obedience of GOD's Will, thro' the Love of Sensuality, or a prevailing Principle of Pride, Arrogance and Self-conceit, resign themselves to the Conduct of that worldly Wisdom which is opposite thereunto; endeavouring to lessen the Dignity and Efficacy of that Divine Sacrifice, by which alone their Sins can be expiated, and their Everlasting,

lasting Happiness secur'd. For these shall be judg'd by that very SAVIOUR, whose Divine Authority and Merits they have so much undervalu'd, and whose infinite Condescension, and astonishing Love they have most unworthily despis'd; and likewise by that GOSPEL which they have so audaciously rejected and oppos'd, and made the common Subject of their profane Wit and Drollery: So that their Guilt, if persisted in, will admit of no Remission, but they must unavoidably fall under the severest Condemnation; and it would have been infinitely better for them if they had never had a Being.

IF Persons of such a Sceptical Disposition, and harden'd in Infidelity, were to hear an immediate Voice from Heaven, warning them of their great Danger, and of their Duty; and admonishing them, as they regarded their Everlasting Happiness, to Repent, Believe, and Obey the GOSPEL; 'tis reasonable to think, That when they had conquer'd the first Shock, and the Surprise was a little worn off, so that their former Incredulity and Licentious Inclinations began to

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make



make Head against them, they would soon argue themselves out of their Memory and Senses, as well as their Reason; and conclude the Whole to have been but a mere Illusion. If the Age of Miracles were to be once more renew'd; could any be expected so extraordinary, so unquestionable, and attended with so strong Evidence of a Divine Power, as those which were wrought by our Blessed SAVIOUR Himself? And yet all these were so far from having any good Effect upon the prejudic'd Minds of as nice and confident Pretenders to Reason and universal Knowledge as any now-adays; that they rather heighten'd their implacable Enmity and Opposition against the Omnipotent Author of them. They were so Unreasonable as to call often upon Him for Proofs of His Heavenly Mission and Authority; tho' they saw every Day such as the World had never seen; and such as nothing else but a perverse Temper, sour'd with inveterate Prejudice, and a fond Conceit of their own partial Conclusions, could possibly have been unaffected with. They look'd indeed for the very Things which they so obstinately oppos'd; having been plainly pointed out to them by their own Prophets,

phets, several Ages before; and chiefly stumbl'd at the Manner of their Accomplishment: Tho' 'twas perfectly agreeable to Reason, and every way consistent with the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that the Planter of so Pure and Perfect a System of Heavenly Doctrine, which was eminently founded in Humility, and design'd to prepare Men for the everlasting Happiness of a Future State, should be accompany'd with none of those worldly Attractives which have a natural Tendency to cherish the dangerous Pride and Vanity of their Hearts. But the Conduct of our Modern *Deists* is still more perverse and inexcusable: Who, having before them the sad Example of their Rejection, thro' Unbelief; strongly enforc'd by the most pathetic Warnings and Admonitions upon that account; together with the clearest, the most rational and practical Intimations of the Divine Will, that ever were or could possibly have been imparted to Mankind; under their weak Pretensions to Natural Religion, boldly strike at the Authority of what God has so clearly reveal'd, and so wonderfully attested; and thereby wilfully destroy the only Foundation of their Forgiveness

giveness and Acceptance with Him, and of their whole Title to Eternal Life and Blessedness.

FOR the Cure of this Monstrous Infidelity; whilst the Holy Scriptures and all Human Arguments agreeable thereunto, prove ineffectual: Let it be suppos'd, That some Person were really, or in Appearance, to return from the Infernal World; and to make the most lively and affecting Report of the Horrors of that invisible State. Could any more powerful and lasting Impressions be expected from thence, than from the ordinary Means which GOD has appointed for the Conviction of Mankind? Would such an one assure them that within a short Time they must die; That their Being will not be annihilated, but continu'd under the most lively Sensations for ever; and that there will be a Righteous and Terrible Day of Judgment which none can escape? Could he, from the dreadful Mistakes of his past Conduct, in the most piercing Accents imaginable, declare the Certainty of the great Principles of the Christian Faith; and urge upon them the Necessity of leading their Lives answerable thereto? These  
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are Points which they were sufficiently acquainted with before : Which they had read and heard, and which had been strongly recommended to their serious Consideration, Times without Number ; upon much better Authority, and less liable to Scruple, than such a Testimony would be. If he should further beseech them, with the greatest Vehemency of Expression, to forsake their evil Ways, to redeem the Time, and to make Religion the great Business of their Lives ; that they may not have their perpetual Abode with him in those Regions of insupportable Darkness and Horror : Would it be possible for him to express their Danger or their Duty in clearer or fuller Words, or to give more convincing Representations of Things, or to use stronger Arguments, or shew more Confirmation of the Truth of what he asserted, than the Gracious REDEEMER of Mankind, and His Inspir'd *Apostles* have done ? If it be imagin'd that such a Person, having felt the Torments of the Damned, might go farther in his Account of them : Certainly the Omniscient and Almighty BEING, who has both threaten'd and prepar'd these, is best able to describe them : And  
this

this He has abundantly done, under such Metaphors and sensible Allusions as Men are most apt to be affected with. For, as the Glories of the Heavenly World, and the Eternal Happiness of the Blessed, are too great to be cloath'd with Human Language, or fully represented by any present *Ideas* of Mortal Creatures; so the Everlasting Punishment appointed for all Unbelieving and finally impenitent Sinners, is unutterable by the Tongue of Man, and therefore too Great for any of our Epithets: So that the only Notions we can have of it must be taken from Common and Sensible Things. St. Paul says, \* *Knowing the Terrors of the LORD, we persuade Men*: And if such Persuasions as His, and those of Other Sacred Writers, have no Effect upon them; if they can hear, in the Ordinary Course of Preaching, the invaluable Privileges and Promises of the GOSPEL display'd before them, together with the Dreadful Threatnings due to wilful Obstinacy and Impenitence; and yet remain as unconcern'd, as stupid and secure in a Course of Impiety, as if they resolv'd to venture the Issue, be it what

\* 2 Cor. v. 11.

what 'twill; 'tis at least highly probable that they would not be effectually reclaim'd by any other Warning in a Way Extraordinary; tho' it might for a short Time strike the Passions, and a little affect them. Our Blessed SAVIOUR has given us a plain Intimation in such a Case, That they who will not hearken to *Moses and the Prophets, i. e. to the Voice of GOD*, in the standing Declaration of His Holy Will, and of the only Terms and Method of Salvation which He has graciously afforded them (and which has been since eminently heigh-ten'd explain'd and enforc'd by the *Gospel Revelation*); nor yet, to the concurring Testimony of their Reason and Conscience, assisted by the common Influences of Divine Grace; would be Proof against every Thing that could be urg'd for their Conviction by a special Messenger from the other World.

THE general Method of GOD's Dealing with Men for their Good, is by Working on their Rational Faculties; and that, very rarely in an irresistible Manner. For, tho' Repentance, which is the Ground-work of Salvation, is his special  
L Gift;



Gift ; yet He, who is infinite in Wisdom, as well as Power, has appointed the Way and Means of effecting the Conviction Renovation and Final Happiness of Mankind ; and He is always ready to bless those Means, with the co-operating Assistance of His Grace : But, when these are slighted, abus'd, or disregarded, there can be no just Ground to expect the Concurrence of His Blessing in any other Way, which the Vain Curiosity of Men can propound or wish for. The Obstinate *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had an amazing Instance, in the Case of *Lazarus*, of One brought back from the Other World. Many of them saw the Solemnity of His Burial ; and were, doubtless, very decently affected with it. They saw Him likewise, Four Days after, rais'd again, by a Power which they could not but acknowledge to be Divine. They ate, drank and convers'd with Him daily, after His Return to Life ; and were satisfy'd that this could not possibly be a Delusion. But, did this at all soften their Prejudice, or cure their Infidelity, with respect to the Divine Agent ? Quite the contrary : Their Malice grew thereupon the more implacable ;

ble; so that they projected the Death, both of *Lazarus* and of Him who had so miraculously rescu'd him from the Grave and Putrefaction. Our Blessed Lord, not long after, rais'd Himself, when He had been dead and buried part of Three Days: And, tho' there were many Unquestionable Witnesses of it: tho' 'twas exactly answering to what He had foretold them, and to the Predictions of their own *Prophets*, whom they held in great Veneration; tho' they were sufficiently convinc'd of it themselves; tho' their gross Forgery of His being stoln away, was detected by *Pilate's* strict Examination of the Soldiers, and sending a fair Account of it to the *Roman Emperor*; tho' His Resurrection was confirm'd by the *Apostles*, and a great Number of other Living Witnesses, who convers'd with Him often for the Space of Forty Days, and at last saw Him in the Day Time ascend towards Heaven; and all this, back'd with a visible and astonishing Effusion of the HOLY GHOST on the whole Assembly of those that Believ'd on Him, and a Succession of many other Extraordinary Miracles wrought in His Name: Yet all was

not sufficient to reclaim the Generality of that Wicked and Obstinate Generation from their Unbelief, and to provoke them to Repentance: But, on the contrary, it rather heighten'd their Malice and Opposition against that Heavenly Doctrine and the Blessed Author of it. Surely this, if any Thing will, may suffice to prove the Ignorance Vanity and wicked Arrogance of all such as presume to find Fault with the Ordinary Methods of G O D's infinite Wisdom and Goodness in imparting the Knowledge of His Blessed Will to Mankind; and will not be satisfy'd without a Gratification of their perverse Humours by a special and immediate Revelation: since He has condescended to do much more for them in an Ordinary Way; having given them in His Holy Word, far better Helps, and safer Directions towards the Attainment of Everlasting Happiness.

BUT, to talk to these Men of Reason, of *the Word of G O D*, or the Authority of the *Sacred Writings*, is but Beating the Air: For, to allow This, would be, to give up their whole Cause at once;  
and



and therefore this strong Hold must be defended at any Rate : Yet, herein, their gross Prejudice and Partiality are shamefully apparent. They are forward enough to depend on some very Ancient Histories ; such as the *Grecian* and *Roman*, (and, even, on some much more backward ; such as the *Syrian*, *Phœnician* and *Chaldaean* Memoirs) which have been handed down to us by Men of great Learning Industry and Reputation. And why should not the Books of *Moses* be of as much Authority with them ; which are not only the most Ancient of any that are extant in the World, but, considering the Frequency of immediate Revelation in those Early Times, the Awful Sublimity of the Matter, the Excellent Design which evidently appears in them ; and the great Humility of the Writer, command a Venerable Regard from every impartial Reader ; and are justly preferable, beyond Comparison, to any other Ancient Writings, both Historical and Preceptive ? His Superior Antiquity is abundantly acknowledg'd by *Gentile Historians* ; as his Miracles were, by his greatest Enemies : And tho' some of them maliciously

ously objected, that these were wrought by Magic; rather than by an immediate Divine Power; such a Suggestion was altogether ridiculous. For, why could not the Magicians of *Egypt*, who were bred to that Art, secure themselves from his Plagues? And why were they forc'd to cry out, *This is the Finger of God*? Could any of them divide a Sea, and command the Waters back again to their former Course? Could they bring up Quails sufficient to feed so Vast a Multitude; or draw a plentiful Supply of Water from a stony Rock? Could any other than a Divine Power, have nourish'd them for Forty Years, with a miraculous condens'd Dew from Heaven, and preserv'd their Garments from Decay; Or caus'd the Ground to open and swallow up the Tents and Families of *Rebellious Princes*, without the least Hurt to any others that were near them? Yet These, and many other Wonders, altogether above the Power of Nature, were done by *Moses*, in the View of many Hundred Thousand Persons, of whom not a Few were strongly prejudic'd against him. Nor would he have dar'd to commit them to Writing, if any One Particular

cular had been liable to Exception; or would the People have receiv'd those Writings for Divine, as it is manifest that they did. 'Tis therefore evident that he related Nothing but what every Person knew to be true. He wrote what GOD commanded, and what his own Conscience testified; and caus'd it to be read to the People, to put them in mind of their high Obligations and of their Duty; laying it up in the *Ark*, as an Everlasting Memorial of GOD's Covenant with them and their Posterity. When the Time of his Death drew near, he left a Distinct and Memorable Blessing to the Twelve Tribes, written in such a Lofty and Inimitable Style, as plainly shews it to be more than Human; and exhorted them, in the most pathetical manner, to adhere stedfastly to the true Worship of GOD, and to the Holy Laws and Covenant which He had establish'd with them. He faithfully reminded them of his own Personal Infirmities, as the Cause why he was excluded from the *Land of Promise*; and resign'd his great Trust to *Joshua*, whom GOD had appointed to succeed him: Having demean'd himself in every Thing  
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as One that acted by a Divine Commission, and prov'd the Authority of his Writings, as the unquestionable Dictates of Almighty GOD.

IN the Historical Part of them, which relates to the Creation of the World, and the most Memorable Matters in the First Ages before his own Time; beside such an Awful Sublimity both as to the Matter and Manner as surpasses all Human Invention, are contain'd many Predictions of the greatest Importance: All which were exactly fulfill'd, and are sufficient to convince any Reasonable and Unprejudic'd Mind of his being Divinely inspir'd. That Early Promise, for the Consolation and Hope of our First Parents, That  
*\* the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*, was universally interpreted of the *Messiah*, and accomplish'd in Him, about Four Thousand Years after. When *Abraham*, the Great Pattern of the Faithful, had no Issue, and according to the ordinary Course of Nature, was incapacitated to have any, a Divine Promise was made to him,  
 That

\* Gen. iii. 15. † *Ibid.* xviii. 18. Ib. xxii. 18.

That \* *in his Seed* [of which the *Messiah* descended] *all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*; That his † Numerous Descendants should inherit the Land of *Canaan*; That they should first sojourn in *Egypt*, under a State of Servitude, and be deliver'd from thence at the End of Four Hundred and Thirty Years: All which was so exactly verified, that, beside the large and particular Account of it in the Book of *Exodus*, 'tis acknowledg'd by || *Heathen Writers*, who were Bitter Enemies both to the *Jews* and to the *Christians*. The Prophetic Blessing of *Jacob*, That *the Scepter should not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet till Shiloh came*, was, by the Ancient *Hebrew Expositors*, unanimously understood as a Prophecy of the *Messiah*; and was compleatly fulfill'd at our SAVIOUR'S Coming: Particularly, the Author of the *Chaldee Paraphrase* and *Onkelos*, who were in great Esteem with the *Jews*, interpret it thus, "Until the *Messiah* comes; who is the Hope and Expectation of all Nations, as well of  
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\* Gen. xviii. 18. *Ibid.* xxii. 18. † *Ib.* xiii. 14, 15.

|| Appion contr. Jud. lib. 4. Porphy. contr. Chr. 4.

“ the *Gentiles*, as of us that are *Jews*.”  
The Line of *Judah* was then, and not before remov’d from the Government by the Usurpation of *Herod*, a Stranger of *Idumea*, who slew *Hyrchanus* and *Aristobulus*, the Two Last in that Line : And not long after the *Jewish* Polity was dissolv’d. When the old dying Patriarch foretold this, the *Israelites* were not only Few in Number, but unlikely to come out of *Egypt*, or ever to be a Distinct People : And, if they should, there was little Prospect that the Dominion should be settl’d in the Tribe of *Judah*, who was but the Fourth Son. Nor was the Improbability either remov’d or lessen’d for full Four Hundred Years after, down to the Time of *Samuel*. Then, indeed, there was a *King* chosen ; but of the Tribe of *Benjamin* ; and he had a Numerous Issue to carry on the Succession : So there was no Human Prospect that this Remarkable Prophecy should take place. Yet Nothing of *God’s* Word, declar’d by His Inspir’d Servant, could fall to the Ground. Therefore, when the *Jews* themselves had no Apprehension of it, *David*, a *Shepherd* of mean Extraction, and the Youngest of his



his Father's House, was, by G O D's special Appointment, chosen out of the Tribe of *Judah*; and the Government so settled in his Family, that tho' Many of his Successors were far more impious than *Saul*, and given up to gross Idolatry; tho' there was a total Defection of *Ten Tribes*, who return'd no more to their Allegiance, but often joyn'd with the Common Enemies of that Kingdom; yet the Sovereignty continu'd in that Line for above Twelve Hundred Years, till the Usurp'd Rule of *Herod*; under which the Promised *Messiah*, who descended from the Tribe of *Judah*, was Born. Of which Uninterrupted Succession to the Government, an accurate Account may be seen at large in the Works of *Josephus* and *Eusebius*.

As to the Preceptive Part of the Writings of this Divine *Lawgiver*, which contain a System of the Negative and Positive Injunctions of G O D to the *Jewish* Nation; there can be no room to doubt but that he carefully, and with the utmost Exactness, follow'd the immediate Divine Directions: 'Tis therefore testified of him, That *he was in all Things faithful*

*in GOD's House* \*. The Book of *Deuteronomy* is a further Continuation of the same Divine *Laws*, by GOD's special Appointment; and likewise a Commemorative Recapitulation of the many Wonderful Blessings and Favours confer'd on that Select People. This was deposited in the Side of the † Ark of the Holy Covenant, for the Caution and Instruction of After-Ages. The concurring Testimonies, and Universal Consent of those who wrote after him, plainly prove that they were guided by the same Pious Care and Integrity. The Writings of *Joshua* confirm, and perfectly agree with those of *Moses*: The Book of *Judges*, bears Analogy to Both the Former: The Four Books of *Kings*, and those of *Chronicles*, bear the same Harmony and Consent: And the several Writings of the *Prophets*, plainly shew an admirable Connexion with each Other, and a perfect Correspondence with the Books of *Moses*; especially, with regard to that Great Blessing of the Promised *Messiah*, and that more perfect Dispensation of the Divine Will, which He should afterwards reveal and establish

\* Heb. iii. 2.

† Deut. xxxi. 24. 25.

blish for the Universal Benefit of Mankind. And our Blessed SAVIOUR, often alluding to them, has both confirm'd their Divine Authority, and testified His Approbation of them All: Particularly, when He says, \* *That all Things must be fulfill'd, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Him;* which was the common and known Distinction of the Holy Scriptures, among the Jews, at that Time.

THE *Prophets*, who were graciously sent by GOD, to reprove and admonish the People of *Israel*, under the Corrupt State of their Church and Monarchy, foretold many Things, of which no Natural Cause could possibly be assign'd; such, as Nothing but an immediate Divine Impulse could have discover'd to them; and such, as were, for the most part, fulfill'd long after their own Death. The Offering up of those † *Idolatrous Priests*, and *burning Mens Bones* upon *Jeroboam's Altar* at *Bethel*, and the very Prince, by Name, who should do it, was exactly foretold Three Hundred and Fifty

\* Luke xxiv. 44.

† 1 Kings xiii. 2.



Fifty Years before-hand, and yet literally \* fulfill'd. The Captivity of *Israel* in *Babylon*, with their Behaviour under it, the Time of its Continuance, and their Happy Restoration, were often so etold them, whilst they fondly promis'd themselves perpetual Ease and Safety in their own Land. Particularly, their Deliverance, and the Rebuilding of their Temple, were prophesied by † *Isaiab*, at least an Hundred Years before the Birth of *Cyrus*, the *Persian* Monarch, whom he had expressly mention'd by Name, as the Happy Instrument of effecting it. The *Assyrian* Monarchy was Formidable in the Time of *Daniel*; who foretold the Downfal of it; and that it should be succeeded by the *Persian*: That this should be destroy'd by the *Grecian*; and that also be divided into Lesser Principalities; till the *Roman* Empire should swallow up All: The Accomplishment whereof, evry One who is conversant in History, cannot but be acquainted with. But the chief Scope of the Prophetic Writings, and that which they harmoniously agree in, is, To give Intimations

\* 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16, &c.  
*Ibid.* xlv. 1, 2.

† Isa. xlv. 28.

timations of the Expected Coming of the *Messiah*; and of the Heavenly Nature, the Gracious Design, and Blessed Effects of His Kingdom; in giving Comfort and Joy, Peace and Happiness to Mankind. The Testimonies of Holy Scripture to this Purpose, are so Numerous, that it would be almost an Endless Task to collect them. The Place Manner and Circumstances of His Birth, with the Chief Actions of His Life; His Doctrine and Miracles; His Meekness, Patience and Condescension; the particular Events relating to His Unparallel'd Sufferings; the Circumstances of His Death, Resurrection and Ascension; the Calling of the *Gentiles*; the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the succeeding Calamities of that Obstinate People; together with the Plantation of His GOSPEL, and the Happy Progress of it; are plainly foretold in the Writings of the Ancient *Prophets*; but more especially, in those of *Isaiah*. The whole 53d Chapter, contains so accurate a Description of our SAVIOUR'S Passion, and agrees so exactly with the *Evangelists*, that it looks more like an History than a Prophecy. The *Chaldee Paraphrast*, who



who dy'd before the Birth of CHRIST, applies this Account of the *Prophet*, to the cutting off of the *Messiah* by the *Jewish Nation*: \* *Rabbi Simeon*, in the Age next following, says, "Wo be to the Men of *Israel*; for they shall slay the *Messiah*:" And *Rabbi Hadarsan*, Commenting on that Part of *Daniel's* Prophecy, proves from thence, "That the *Messiah*, having Preach'd one half of Seven Years, should be slain." Nor is it possible for any to suggest that these were the Forgeries of *Christians*; since these Prophecies, and the Comments upon them were not only extant, but generally known and receiv'd, long before the Name of *Christianity* was known in the World; and the Prophecies themselves are still zealously defended by the *Jews*, who are the most inveterate Enemies to it.

FROM the Universal Benefits which were to attend the Coming of the *Messiah*, as the Hope Expectation and Desire of all Nations, the partial and evasive Interpretations of the later *Jews*, who fondly expected Him to be a Temporal King, that  
should

\* Lib. de Spe.



should subdue the *Gentile Nations* unto them, would very justly seem strange; were it not for that special Providence which made Way thereby for those Great Events concerning Him: For, whereas they held, from Sacred Prophecy, That the Temporal Kingdom of *Judah* should cease at the Coming of the *Messiah*; yet they absurdly imagin'd that He should not only restore, but render that Temporal Kingdom Everlasting. But the Divine Promises concerning that Blessed and Holy One, throughout the whole Body of the *Old Testament*, run in a quite different Strain: Plainly representing a Person that should be sent by GOD, to be a *Saviour, a Redeemer, a Reconciler, or Mediator* between GOD and Man; One that should make Satisfaction for the Sins of the World, and be a Divine Teacher, a Lawgiver, and a Spiritual King; to reign in the Hearts of Men, and to deliver them from the Power and Bondage of that Common Enemy, who had gain'd so Vast an Advantage over our First Parents and their whole Posterity. Thus the *Chaldee Paraphrase* explains and applies that First Promise *Gen. iii. 15*. And to this Purpose, those

Memorable Passages, \* *His Name shall endure for ever; Men shall be Blessed in Him; and all Nations shall call Him Blessed; † This is the Name whereby He shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness; || I will give Thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayst be my Salvation unto the Ends of the Earth;* and many others of the like Nature have been constantly explain'd. So likewise those admirable Prophetic Testimonies of the Holy Psalmist, \*\* *I will make Him my First-Born, higher than the Kings of the Earth; \*\*\* Thou art my Son: this Day have I begotten thee; Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish: Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him;* have been alledg'd by Rabbi Jonathan Nathan, Aben-ezra and other of the Ancient Rabbins, to prove that the *Messiah* should be the Very Son of GOD. And even the Learned Philo, (tho' he was not so Happy as to discern the Accomplishment) in his Book of the *Jews Exile and Dispersion*, declares his Opinion, "That the High Priest which was to die for them, should

\* Psal. lxxii. 17. † Jer. xxiii. 6. || Isa. xlix. 6.

\*\* Psal. lxxxix. 27, \* \* Ibid. ii. 7, 12.



“ should be the Very *Word of God*,  
 “ void of all Sin, either voluntary or  
 “ involuntary; and that this *Word* should  
 “ be the Wisdom of the Father, by  
 “ whom all Things in this World were  
 “ made.” As to the Incredulity of that  
 Miserable People, and their inflexible Op-  
 position against the *Messiah* and His Do-  
 ctrine: ’Tis so far from being any Ground  
 of Objection, that ’tis in reality a corro-  
 borating Proof of the Truth and Cer-  
 tainty of Both; in as much as it bears  
 an exact Agreement with the patheticall  
 Prophecies of *David* and *Isaiah* concern-  
 ing them; \* *That the Chief Corner Stone*  
*should be rejected*; and that *they should*  
 † *despise* and disown Him, at the Time  
 of His Manifestation. And surely, with  
 every unprejudic’d Person, the Testimo-  
 ny of || *St. John the Baptist*, that *Mes-*  
*senger sent before Him, to prepare His*  
*Way*, should be esteem’d of some Weight.  
*Josephus*, speaking of Him, says, “ ‡ He  
 “ was a most Excellent Person, and One  
 “ that stirr’d up the *Jews* to the Study  
 “ and Practice of Vertue.” The *Jews*  
 themselves had so high an Opinion of

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his

\* Psal. cxviii. 22. † Isa. liiii. 3. || Mal. iii. 1.

‡ Antiq. Lib. 18. cap. 7.



his Wisdom Piety and Veracity, that they seem'd forward enough to have given him the Honour and Title of the *Messiah*: Which he not only refus'd, but openly ascrib'd to the Holy JESUS; and upon the first Sight of Him, both knew and proclaim'd Him as such, in the Presence of all the People. And soon after, the same was publickly confirm'd by an extraordinary Vision and a Voice from Heaven declaring Him to be the Son of GOD: These were both seen and heard by the wondring Multitude; as Three of the Blessed *Evangelists* testify: Which they certainly would not have presum'd to do, if the Matter had not been well known, and past all Possibility of Contradiction. It being therefore evident, That from the Beginning of the World there was a *Messiah* or *Saviour* promis'd; That long before His actual Appearance, the Time Manner and Circumstances of His Coming, with the Nature and Happy Design of His Doctrine Miracles Life Death Resurrection and Ascension, were plainly describ'd; so that the Fulfilling of these Prophecies might be a reasonable and convincing Satisfaction to Mankind; and that all this was corroborated

borated by the general Expositions of the Ancient Learned *Rabbins*, with the Universal Expectations of the *Jews*, the Translation of the Government from *Judab's* Line, the Destruction of the *second Temple*, the just Calculation of the *Prophetic Weeks* in *Daniel*, and the Utter Dispersion of the *Jewish Race*, for near One Thousand Seven Hundred Years over the Face of the whole Earth, without any *Temple*, *Sacrifice* or *Prophet*, and without the least Prospect of a Restoration : All these agreeing Circumstances, impartially consider'd, do abundantly prove the Divine Mission and Manifestation of the Blessed JESUS, at the Time appointed and foretold in the Ancient Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, and witnessed by the Holy *Evangelists*; and consequently, That He was the Only True *Messiah*, and the *Saviour* of Mankind. But, beside the Numerous and Unquestionable Proofs which attended His Life and Converse on Earth; from the many Miraculous Evidences of His Divine Power, after His Ascension into Heaven, every Reasonable and Unprejudic'd Mind cannot but be thoroughly convinc'd of the Truth and Divine Authority

Authority of that Holy Religion which He has taught and establish'd in the World; and that This is the Only Way of *Serving God acceptably*, so as to attain Everlasting Happiness.

As to the Manner of His Wonderful Incarnation and Birth, the Prophet *Isaiah* is in several Places very clear and particular: And \* *Micah* names the very Town of *Bethlehem*, as the Place assign'd for it; with this special Remark, denoting His Eternal Deity, That *His Goings forth*, or Manifestations, *were from Everlasting*. The Roman Historians † *Tacitus* and ‡ *Suetonius* mention it as a common Fame at that Time, "That there should appear an Universal Lord of the World. Which probably induc'd those Eastern *Magi* to attend the Guidance of that Extraordinary *Star*, that they might find out the Place of His Birth. These Circumstances were generally known: If they had not been so, the *Evangelist* could not have given a greater Advantage to the Enemies of Christianity, than by mentioning them. That *Star* is taken notice of by || *Pliny*,  
as

\* Mic. v. 2. † Lib. 2. ‡ In Vit. Vesp. || Lib. 2. c. 25.



as exceedingly Different from any that had been ever seen before: And *Chalcidius* \* observes, That the *Chaldean* Astronomers infer'd from it the Descent of some Deity from Heaven, for the Good of Mankind. Likewise that memorable Darkness of Three Hours, at the Time of our SAVIOUR'S Crucifixion, is recorded by *Heathen* Writers skill'd in *Astronomy*, and of good Note; with a special Limitation to the same Year Day and Hours; and with this further Remark, That from the State of the Moon at that Time, being then at the Full, 'twas impossible an Eclipse could have happen'd from any Natural Cause. 'Tis also very remarkable, That the particular Events which attended our SAVIOUR'S Life and Death, are accurately describ'd in the Books of *Sacred Prophecy*, several Ages before His Manifestation on Earth. " The † Time of His " Appearance, and the || Wonderful Manner of it; The ‡ Cruel Murder of the " Infants; The \*\*\* rich Presents and " Homage of the *Eastern Princes*; His " \* Flight

\* Chalc. apud Marf. Ficin. de Stella. † Gen. xlix. 10. Dan. ix. 26. || Isa vii. 14. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 15. \*\* Psal. lxxii. 10.

“ \* Flight into *Egypt*, and Return;  
 “ The Preparative Mission of *St. John*  
 “ *the Baptist* †; The great || Humility  
 “ and Sweetness of His Behaviour; His  
 “ Extraordinary and Miraculous † Heal-  
 “ ing of Diseases; The \*\* Meanness of  
 “ His Appearance, with the Contempt  
 “ and Rejection of the *Jews* upon  
 “ that account; His \* \* Sufferings and  
 “ Death for the Sins of Mankind; His  
 “ being † Betray’d by His own Disciple,  
 “ and †† Sold for Thirty Pieces of Sil-  
 “ ver, and the Potter’s Field purchas’d  
 “ with the Price of His Blood; His  
 “ ††† Riding publickly to *Jerusalem* on  
 “ an Ass’s Colt; The || Smiting and  
 “ Spitting on His Face; The ||| Scourg-  
 “ ing and Bruising of His Body; The  
 “ |||| Piercing of His Side; His † Suffer-  
 “ ing with Malefactors; The \* Vine-  
 “ gar which was offer’d Him to drink;  
 “ His Bitter Complaint of Dereliction on  
 “ the Cross, † *My God, my God, &c.*  
 and

\* Hof. xi. 1.

|| Isa. xlii. 2.

\*\* Ib. liii. 2, 3.

† Psal. xli. 9.

†† Zech. ix. 9.

|||| Zech. xii. 10.

\* Psal. lxi. 21.

† Isa. xl. 3. Mal. iii. 1.

‡ Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. Ib. lxi. 1.

\* \* Ib. Ver. 5, 6, 10.

†† Zech. xi. 12, 13.

|| Isa. l. 6. ||| Ib. liii. 5.

‡ Isa. lii. 12.

† Ps. xxii. 1.

“ and the very Words of the insulting  
 “ *Jews, \* He trusted in God that He*  
 “ *would deliver Him; let Him now de-*  
 “ *liver Him, &c.* The † Parting of His  
 “ Garments, and Casting Lots for His  
 “ Vesture; His || Resurrection from the  
 “ Grave, on the Third Day; and His  
 “ \*\* Ascension into Heaven, and Sitting  
 “ at the Right Hand of GOD.” All  
 these Events, with many others, relating  
 to the *Messiah*, were clearly foretold by  
 the *Inspir'd Prophets*, in different Ages,  
 and at a very great Distance of Time  
 from the Literal Accomplishment of  
 them in the Person of JESUS CHRIST:  
 And those Prophetic Writings which  
 contain them, have been both care-  
 fully preserv'd, with great Veneration  
 and Regard, by the inveterate Enemies  
 of the Christian Faith, and are the  
 same which we enjoy at this Day. So  
 that it was impossible for the Divine  
 Providence to have done more either to  
 prepare the Minds of Men for a worthy  
 and becoming Expectation of so impor-  
 tant a Truth; or to excite and encou-  
 O rage

\* Psal. xxii. 8. † *Ib. ver.* 18. || Psal. xvi. 9, 10.  
 Isa. xxvi. 19. Hof. vi. 2. \*\* Psal. lxxviii. 18.  
*Ib. cx. 1.*



rage them unto a thankful Belief and obedient Reception of it, when it was compleatly manifested.

THAT the Object of Faith and Salvation was the same in all Ages, is plain from the general Scope of the Sacred Writings. *Abraham*, that eminent Pattern and Father of the Faithful, rejoyc'd, at so great a Distance, in a comfortable Prospect of the *Messiah's* Manifestation; as likewise did *Jacob Moses* and *David*: And many other holy *Prophets* and *Kings* desir'd to see that Happy Time, and died in the full Assurance of its Accomplishment. Nor was there any Age without some, who bare witness to this great Truth. When the Fulness of that appointed Time was come, *Simeon Anna Joseph* of *Arimathea*, and many other Holy Persons waited, in the pious Exercises of Faith and Prayer, for this crowning Hope and *Consolation* of *Israel*; as the great Point wherein all the Testimonies of Sacred Prophecy did harmoniously terminate. And *They* who are most unreasonably Prejudic'd against the Faith and Doctrines of *Christianity*, cannot deny but that the most distinguishing

guishing and unexceptionable Characters of the *Messiah*, upon Sacred Record, do all meet together in the Blessed JESUS. That He was to be Born of the *Seed of David*, and in the Town of *Bethlehem*, was plain from the Testimony of the *Prophets*, and the general Expectation of the *Jews*. That JESUS was so Born, the unbelieving *Scribes* and *Pharisees* never could deny; and their \* *Talmud* since, has expressly own'd it. The Prophecy of *Jacob* had fix'd the Time of His Birth to be, before the *Sceptre* should depart from the Tribe of *Judah*: *Daniel*, according to the general Explanation of His *Mystic Weeks*, had describ'd it to be within Four Hundred and Ninety Years after the Building of the second Temple: The *Prophets Haggai* and *Malachi* foretold His Coming to that Temple, before its Destruction: The *Prophet Isaiah* expressly declar'd His Appearance and Converse in *Galilee*; that He should enlighten them with His Heavenly Doctrine, and do many wonderful Works there, such, as Healing the Sick, giving Sight to the Blind, &c. and yet, that He

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should

\* Talmud Tract. Sanhed. c. Nigmarhad.

should be despis'd, rejected, buffeted, spit upon, and put to Death; that He should submit to all this cruel Usage with the greatest Meekness and Patience; and should bear the Sins of Many, and be numbred among the Transgressors, tho' He had no Sin in Himself. And elsewhere it is Prophefied, That He should turn the *Heathen* from their Idolatry; and to Him should the gathering of the Nations be. So that no other Person but One of the House of *David*, which was then greatly impoverish'd and almost extinct, Born at that Time, and in that Place, and answering all these Qualifications, could, with any Colour of Reason, pretend to be the *Messiah*: Yet all these Circumstances were exactly verifi'd in the Person Doctrine Miracles and Sufferings of JESUS CHRIST. That very many of the *Jews* were convinc'd by His extraordinary Miracles, of His being the True *Messiah*, is plain from their Forwardness to have invested Him with a Regal Title and Authority; if He had not avoided the Effects of their troublesome Ignorance, by withdrawing Himself. They had fondly, and without any just Ground from Holy Scripture,



ture, fix'd it as an Essential Character of the *Messiah*, That He should confer on the *Jewish* Nation an universal Empire of the World; and therefore concluded that all Pretensions, contrary to this favourite Notion, must needs be false. So that, upon His declining all Temporal Power and Grandeur, they soon chang'd their Acclamations of *Hosannah to the Son of David*, into unanimous Importunities for His Crucifixion: Enforcing it with a false Shew of Loyalty to *Cæsar*; whose Yoke they would have fain thrown off, if they could but have prevail'd with *JESUS* to set up the Banner of a Temporal Deliverer. That it is possible for Him to have been an Impostor, is inconsistent with the Reason and Nature of Things. For certainly, no Person who intended to seduce Mankind, would have ever taken so contrary a Method, as that of enjoining Precepts directly opposite to the strong Propensions of Flesh and Blood, and to all the Views of worldly Interests; but would rather have suited Himself to the general Taste of Mens corrupt Inclinations. Nor would any one of such false and deceiving Aims have voluntarily expos'd

pos'd Himself to the greatest of Hardships and Indignities; or chose to be *a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief*, and to lay down His Life for the general Benefit of others, who were very far from deserving it; or expos'd Himself to the most exquisitely painful as well as ignominious Death, in Hopes of being rais'd again Three Days after. 'Twas doubtless a further strong Proof of our SAVIOUR's Divine Wisdom and Authority, That One of so mean a Birth and Education, discover'd so exquisite and universal Knowledge, as to excell the acquir'd Wisdom of the *Jewish Rabbins*, and the most accomplish'd *Philosophers*; at a Time when Learning and Arts were in the most flourishing State: That He laid down more excellent Rules of Life, than any of the greatest *Sages* had done, or the World had ever known: That He infus'd them so powerfully into the Minds of mean and illiterate Men, as to furnish them with more of the true Knowledge of GOD, of the highest End of Man, of the Measures of Moral Good and Evil, of the Soul's Immortality and Future Judgment, than the most elaborate Searches of the Wise and Learned had

had ever attain'd to. The Testimony of *John*, That *He was the Son of God; the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the World, and One who should baptize with the Holy Ghost*, was to the *Jews*, who acknowledg'd *John* to be truly a *Prophet*, an unexceptionable Witness. Yet the Miracles which He wrought before them in His *Father's* Name, were a much stronger Proof of His Divine Mission and Authority; and especially His Resurrection and Exaltation to the Heavenly Glory. As our Hopes of Eternal Happiness are chiefly founded on *These*; so we have the clearest and most infallible Grounds for a firm Belief and Dependence thereon, that either Human Reason could propose, or the Divine Providence could impart to us. For, lest the clear and positive Testimonies of the Holy *Prophets*, or even the Promise of their Blessed *Lord* Himself, should be insufficient to comfort and strengthen the Faith of His sorrowful *Disciples* in this Fundamental Point; He compassionately condescended to the most unquestionable Evidence, even that of the Senses: As if it were design'd not only for their Satisfaction, but to cure the wilful



wilful Stubbornness and Infidelity of After-Times. First Two of the Heavenly Host were sent to be Witnesses, and to give their Testimony of the Fact it self. They saw him not only Risen, but Rising; and contributed thereto by *rolling away the Stone from the Mouth of the Sepulchre*. They assur'd His Friends, who came with a trembling Concern to observe the Event, That *He was not there, but was risen*. Then several of them personally saw Him; and afterwards all His Disciples together. They convers'd familiarly with Him; ate, drank and discours'd with Him as really as they had done before His Passion; and knew infallibly that it was He Himself, by His Countenance, by His Voice, by feeling his solid Flesh with their Hands, by seeing and feeling the Wounds both of the Spear in His Side, and of the Nails in His Hands and Feet, wherewith He had been fasten'd to the Cross. The Assurance of this Great Article of their Faith, That JESUS CHRIST, the Lord of Life and Glory, was *risen from the Dead*, had so deep an Impression on the Minds both of them and their Followers, that the severest Troubles

bles and Persecutions which they afterwards underwent for His Sake, could never make them disown, or so much as question the Certainty of it. 'Tis therefore, beyond any reasonable Doubt, that there never was any Matter of Fact, since the World began, more fully prov'd, by the concurring Testimony of so many Persons of unquestionable Sincerity, not only hazarding but actually laying down their Lives in the Defence of it, than this has been. But these are not the only Proofs of this great Branch of the *Christian Faith*. For our SAVIOUR Himself has given further Demonstration of it, so fully and powerfully convincing, that if neither Angel nor any Human Creature had ever seen Him since His Resurrection, yet Reason it self would claim an Assent to the Truth of it, from the exact Accomplishment of another eminent Promise. To alleviate the Grief of His *Disciples*, He had told them a little before His Passion, That when He was gone to those Blessed Regions from whence He descended, He would *send them another Comforter*, even the *Holy Spirit*: And this He literally fulfill'd, in a Manner so visible, and so very extraordinary,

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ordinary, that both the Appearance and the Effects of it were observ'd by a vast Concourse of People, from many remote Parts of the World, with the highest Transports of Admiration. Beside all this, we have (as the Author of that excellent Epistle to the *Hebrews* affirms) the infallible Testimony of GOD the Father, the Eternal Fountain of Truth and Faithfulness; in that *He bare witness to the Apostles* and their Fellow-Planters of the GOSPEL, *with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own Will.* So that every Sermon preach'd by the Blessed *Apostles*, and those other Primitive *Martyrs* and *Confessors*; every Miracle they wrought; every Hardship they underwent for the Sake of their Heavenly *Lord* and *Master*, and that Holy *Gospel* which He had instituted; and especially that Almighty Power which accompany'd it, to the utter Confusion of all Opposers; and the Profelyting of so great a Part of Mankind to the Faith and Obedience of it; all these united Proofs, and corroborating Circumstances amount to a Divine Demonstration of the infallible Truth of this most Important and Fundamental



damental Article in our Creed, “ That  
 “ JESUS CHRIST having Offer’d up  
 “ Himself as the true and only Sacrifice  
 “ for the Sins of Mankind, and finish’d  
 “ the Work of Redemption on His Cross,  
 “ did really, at the exact Time which  
 “ He had foretold, arise from a State  
 “ of Death, and thereby exalted the Hu-  
 “ man Nature to the Glory Above; as  
 “ the Head of all those that should obe-  
 “ diently believe in Him unto the End of  
 “ the World.”

IF \* Cicero was so highly delighted  
 with the Platonic Doctrine of the Soul’s  
 Immortality, as capable of an everlast-  
 ing Reward for all pious and vertuous  
 Actions in this Life; if these Sentiments,  
 which were then but obscure and im-  
 perfect, were the greatest Comfort of  
 his declining Age, and his chief Support  
 under all the Vicissitudes of Temporal  
 Things; in so much, that he resolv’d to  
 stick by them, and, tho’ they should  
 prove uncertain, “ had rather err with  
 “ Plato, in a Matter which afforded so  
 “ great Consolation at present, than be in

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the

\* Tusc. Quæst.

“ *the right with his Opponents.* ” How much stronger Reason have we, to value and adhere to a *Doctrine* so desirable in it self, and so full of the truest Comfort Encouragement and Hope; being eminently bless’d with the much clearer Light of *Evangelical Revelation*, and not left to our own uncertain Thoughts in framing to ourselves weak and unsatisfactory Guesses about a Future State! We have the fullest Assurance imaginable, and as far as a Rational Mind can desire, That our Blessed SAVIOUR, on the Behalf of all them that truly believe and obey His GOSPEL, has made a perfect Expiation for their Sins and Guilt, and thereby disarm’d Death of all its Terror: That He has, in His own Person, sanctified the Grave, and made it both a safe and comfortable Habitation *to those who Sleep in Him*; and has, not only, by His own repeated Promise, assur’d them that at His next Coming, to make an universal Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, their Bodies, *which were foren in Corruption, shall be rais’d Immortal and Incorruptible*, so as to compleat the Happiness of the whole Man, in a joyful Reunion never to be dissolv’d; but has farther

further engag'd His own victorious Resurrection as a sure Pledge of it. Nothing can be so powerful to dispel the Fears and moderate the Agonies which a Prospect of Dissolution is apt to throw weak Flesh and Blood into, as such a firm and well-grounded Belief that the Mortal Body, which must shortly fall a Lump of despicable Earth, shall rise brighter than any Star of Heaven; and be made *like to the Glorified Body of CHRIST*, so as to be for ever with Him, to behold His Glory, and to see Him as He is. What may abundantly satisfy every pious and reasonable Person, is, That infinite Wisdom and Power, which at first gave Being to all Things, have undertaken to accomplish this great Work; and tho' we cannot explicitly comprehend the Manner *How*, yet we may rest fully assur'd that the Thing itself shall be: For *He is Faithful who has promis'd it*; and, as He can neither be deceiv'd nor deceive Mankind, so 'tis our indispensable Duty, and the best Homage that we are capable of paying, to believe Him on His Word. On this sure Foundation, we may therefore safely bid Defiance to all the cavilling Objections which



which either Human Wit or Philosophy can make to the contrary. And if so; then we need not be much concern'd, That, after a few Days more are pass'd over our Heads, we must leave the pleasant Light of this World, and go down into the gloomy Mansions of Death; That we must cease from all Action Business and Conversation here; be laid out of Sight and Remembrance, and have our Bodies chang'd into Dust and Rottenness. This is indeed a Melancholy Scene to Flesh and Blood; and the more affecting, because we know 'tis unavoidable, and that a few short Turns more in the World, will certainly bring us to it. Yet, if we consider rightly, who would be afraid or unwilling, nay, who would not be forward to think on That which is the necessary Way to his highest Advancement; and to the attaining of these glorious Hopes, to which all the Care Study and Endeavours of his whole Life are, or ought to be principally directed? They who stedfastly believe these great and Fundamental Truths; who, by an obedient Faith in the inestimable Promises of the GOSPEL, endeavour truly to live according to the Rules

Rules of that Holy Institution ; have great Reason, during their short Stay in this World, to wait with Serenity and Cheerfulness for that Happy Change, which will fix them above all the Dangers Temptations and Calamities to which they are now expos'd, in that most delightful Society of *Just Men made Perfect* ; where Wisdom Truth and Faithfulness are the everlasting Entertainment, and All rejoyce in mutual Love. Such Views as these are sufficient to inspire them with pure and elevated Affections ; and to raise their Minds so powerfully above all the little Concerns of this Life, as to be entirely reconcil'd to frequent Thoughts of their Dissolution, especially as they apprehend the near Approaches of it. But then, How miserably infatuated, how unkind, how barbarous and unaccountably cruel, both to themselves and to the rest of Mankind, are *They*, who, against the strong Propensions of Nature, the Dictates of Reason, and the most encouraging Assurance of Divine *Revelation*, endeavour, by all the strain'd and quibbling Arguments which their wretched Sophistry can invent, to rob themselves and others of the truest Comfort

fort and Satisfaction in this Life, and to cut off that Happy Reserve of an encouraging Prospect into Futurity!

As to the Spotless Purity of our Blessed SAVIOUR's Life, the Sanctifying Tendency of His Doctrine, the Certainty of His many wonderful and instantaneous Cures, and His unwearied Labours in doing Good to the Bodies and Souls of Men: These, without any Recourse to the *Evangelists*, are sufficiently attested in common History, and even confess'd by His greatest Adversaries; for His Life was a perfect Mirrour, representing, in the liveliest Manner, all those Divine Graces which were contain'd in His Doctrine. His Miracles were public, and well known to the whole Body of the *Jewish* Nation: Especially His restoring the Daughter of *Jairus*, the Ruler of the *Synagogue*; and the *Centurion's* Servant: His raising the Widow's Son at *Nain*: His Healing the Impotent Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*, in the Time of the *Passover*, when there was the greatest Concourse of People: His Curing a Dropsy in the House of a *Pharisee*: His giving Sight to the  
Man



Man that had been born Blind: His raising *Lazarus* from the Grave; and His Feeding Five Thousand with a small Pittance of Provisions. Had the *Evangelists* made but the least Slip in relating these, or any other Matters, the Captious *Pharisees* would certainly have taken hold of it, and improv'd it to the utmost Advantage; whereas they have never yet attempted, in any One Instance, to contradict those Sacred and Faithful Historians. *Josephus*, tho' a great Patron of the *Jewish* Religion, in his *Antiquities*, written about Forty Years after CHRIST's Death, says, \* "About this Time liv'd one JESUS, a Wise Man, "if it be fit to call Him a Man; a Worker of Astonishing Miracles, and a Teacher of All that were willing to embrace the Truth." And elsewhere, in the same History, he speaks of His Crucifixion by *Pilate* at the Instigation of the *Jews*, and of His Return to Life the Third Day, and Appearing to His Disciples, as a Reward of their steady Affection to Him. And *Porphyry*, a severe Enemy to the *Christians*, after his

Q Account

\* Antiq. Lib. 18. c. 7.

Account of the *Heathen* Oracles, falls into these Expressions; “ \* It is wonderful to consider what Testimony the Gods give to the singular Piety and Vertue of JESU’S; for which they declare Him rewarded with Immortality :” Yet at the same Time he utterly disowns His Deity. But every One who reflects impartially and without Prejudice, on that continu’d Series of Wonders from the first Planting of the GOSPEL thro’ the whole Progress of it, cannot but be convinc’d of the infinite Power and Wisdom of its Blessed Author. The Calling and retaining of His peculiar *Disciples* or *Apostles*, is an evident Proof of His Divine Knowledge and Supernatural Influence upon the Hearts of Men. They were Persons of different Conditions and Engagements in the World: Yet upon the first Intimation given by Him, they immediately quitted all their Relations and Temporal Concerns, to follow One who had no present Rewards to give, nor made them the least Promise of any Advantage in this World; but, on the contrary, preach’d to them Self-Denial, bearing their Cross daily, and enduring

\* De Laude Philos.

during all manner of Hardships for His Sake. One, whose Doctrine and Maxims were opposite to all sensual Gratifications, worldly Interests, and the pleasing Charms of this Life; as is evident from their own Testimonies concerning Him. One, altogether Rejected and Despis'd by the Men of highest Repute for Learning and Wisdom, and Censur'd by those of Rule and Authority, as a Dangerous Enemy to the State. One, who had no visible Means of Subsistence, nor Friends to support Him, nor so much as an House to put His Head in. Yet notwithstanding all these Discouragements, They, who were before easy in their Circumstances, forsook all Temporal Expectations and Employments, and adhered to Him with great Loss, Inconvenience, and Danger. They continu'd with Him in His Poverty Reproaches and Afflictions, and were ready to lose their Lives for Him; choosing This, much rather than to forsake Him and His Service. Which was so Wonderful and altogether above Nature, that it could be imputed to Nothing but the Power and Efficacy of His Heavenly Doctrine upon their Minds.



WHEN the Blessed REDEEMER of Mankind appear'd on Earth, \* *to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in Everlasting Righteousness*; all Historians agree, with the Sacred Prophecy, That it was a Time of great Tranquility, as if an Universal Smile had sat on the Face of Nature. Florus particularly says, "† That there was a General Peace, " or at least a Truce throughout the " World." The Divine Wisdom having so dispos'd of Human Affairs, that || *the Prince of Peace*, who was not to \*\* *strive, nor cry, nor lift up His Voice in the Streets*, should make His Entrance into the World when 'twas most free from the Disturbance of Wars, Strife, †† *confused Noise and Garments roll'd in Blood*. The first Efforts of His public Ministry very highly set forth the Peaceable and Reconciling End of His Mission. They begin with \*\*\* *Blessed are the poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:—Blessed are the Peacemakers; for they shall be called the Children*

\* Dan. ix. 24. † Lib. 4. Prope Einem.

|| Isa. ix. 6. \*\* Ibid. xlii. 2. †† Ib. ix. 5.

\*\*\* Matth. v. 3, 9.

*dren of GOD.* The Great Design which He had in View, was To bring \* *Glory to GOD in the highest*, by the Reconciliation of Fallen Mankind, and Establishing *Peace on Earth, and Good-will both towards and among Men.* To this, the whole System of His Heavenly Precepts is admirably suited. Had any such appear'd in the Works of *Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca*, or any other of the Celebrated *Moralists*, how would the World have admir'd and applauded them! And why should they be less Awful or Valuable, when proceeding immediately from the Eternal Fountain of Wisdom and Truth? He did not abolish or dispense with any Part of the *Law of Moses*, which was of a Moral or Spiritual Nature; but fulfill'd, explain'd, enforce'd, and exalted it to the greatest Perfection. He put an End to the Ceremonial Part of it; which consisted chiefly in External Services, and was not only a Burthen too heavy to be born, but † *a Shadow of Things to come*; and consequently to cease when the Things, so prefigur'd, were actually Present. Instead of which, He substituted a Law of spiritual and inward

\* Luke ii. 14.

† Heb. x. 1.

ward Perfection; a Law of Love and Liberty, of Purity Humility and Charity; common to all Men, and suited to every Age Place and Nation; a Law easy, plain, and practicable; fitted to the Capacities of Mankind, and every Way Amiable in it self; in one Word, a Law of \* *Faith working by Love*. His Manner of Reasoning was always Easy clear and strong, even when He treated of the profoundest Mysteries: Nor did He, like the Celebrated Orators, comply with the Vanity and Corruption of Human Nature, by the empty Flourishes of Rhetoric and the Arts of Insinuation. In the Room of those costly and imperfect Sacrifices appointed by the *Law*, for the Expiation of Sin, He requir'd no other than that much more valuable Sacrifice of an Humble Believing and obedient Heart; an Universal Charity towards Mankind; and a lively Faith in His atoning Merits, who came into the World on Purpose to offer His Life a Ransom for All. So that the great End which He aim'd at, was to make Men truly Happy in both Worlds, by fitting them for the perfect Service of GOD; that they might

\* Gal. v. 6.



might exalt His infinite Wisdom and Power, His Goodness and Glory, and be capable of enjoying Spiritual Communion with Him on Earth: That, being deeply sensible of their manifold Infirmities, they might learn to subdue the Pride and Vanity of their own Hearts; to mortify their sensual Appetites, their sinful Passions, and inordinate Affections; to live above the World, and all its dangerous Temptations, and to raise their Souls into a Divine and Heavenly Frame; till they become fit \* *to be made Partakers of that Glorious and Incorruptible Inheritance Above.* Such was the Doctrine of the Blessed JESUS; and such was the peculiar Office of the Promised Messiah, according to the Prophetic Testimonies of Holy Scripture.

As His Coming into the World was Mean and Obscure; to teach Mankind that they should despise the Vanities of it, and seek after a Better: So His Going out of it was answerable. He sought not His own Glory, but avoided, as much as possible, the Praise and Acclamations of Men; His Holy Mind being  
intent

\* Col. i. 12.

intent upon the Finishing of that Great Work wherein He had voluntarily engag'd. He therefore left the Monuments of His Life, Doctrine, Actions, and Sufferings, to be rais'd by those whom He should afterwards qualify for it, by an extraordinary Power from on High. Two of these *Evangelists* were of His Select *Apostles*, and Eye-Witnesses of the Matter which they committed to Writing. The other Two, were Faithful and Eminent *Disciples*, who wrote what they had receiv'd from the *Apostles*: And, tho' their Narratives were compos'd at different Times, and great Distance of Place, they perfectly agree in every Thing that is Substantial or Material. These Writings they publish'd whilst a great many were living who saw and remember'd the Facts: Which are so expressly mention'd, with the Particulars of Time Place and Persons, that if there had been the least Falsty or Mistake, 'twould have been easy for the watchful Enemies of the Christian Religion to have disprov'd them. Their constant Preaching was exactly agreeable to what they wrote; and they laid down their Lives in the Justification of it. They did not conceal or lessen the  
Faults

Faults and Failings of the *Apostles*; tho' such as might be thought to disparage them. They mention the frequent Rebukes of CHRIST, for their Misapprehensions; their rash Proposal of Fiery Revenge on a *Samaritan* Village; their Want of Faith, and the Dulness of their Understanding: Particularly, the Unbelief of *Thomas*, the Ambition of *James* and *John*, and the Emulation of them All. As a farther Proof of Sincerity; they spar'd not themselves, nor their more particular Friends. *St. Mark*, who was Fellow-Labourer with *St. Peter*, and from whose Dictates he is thought to have compil'd his *Gospel*, is most full in relating that *Apostle's* Denial of his Master; and most sparing in the Account of his Repentance. And *St. Luke*, who was the Companion of *St. Paul* in propagating the GOSPEL, has recorded his Dissension with *Barnabas*, and the Part he acted in the Murder of *Stephen*. So that it is evident they made Conscience of concealing any Part of the Truth, of shewing the least Partiality in what they had undertaken. These *Writings* were carefully perus'd, and in a special Manner approv'd by the *Apostles*; and universally receiv'd for

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undoubted



undoubted Truth, by the whole Christian Church in that Age; many of whom, were well-acquainted with the Particulars contain'd in them. Authentic Copies were dispers'd into numberless Hands, and preserv'd with the utmost Care, and with such Reverence as was due to the Word of GOD. They were read and expounded in the public Assemblies of Christians, in all Countries: So that we may be assur'd they could suffer no Material Corruption; since the Multitude of Copies then extant, must have discover'd any, even the least Variation; and the Writings of those Learned *Fathers*, which quoted them, in the first Ages of the *Christian Church*, plainly shew that they were the very same with those which are in our Hands at this Day. When any perverse Men advanc'd New Opinions, contrary to the Uniform Doctrine of the Church; Appeal was constantly made to these Sacred Writings, as the Common Standard of Faith: All false Glosses and forc'd Interpretations were censur'd and forbidden to be receiv'd; and no Doctrines or Opinions were esteem'd Orthodox, but as they agreed with this Rule.

As to that Great and most important Article of our Blessed SAVIOUR'S *Resurrection*, on which the Efficacy of His Mission and Doctrine eminently depends: 'Tis impossible for any Thing to be more strongly and irrefragably, prov'd for the Reasonable Satisfaction of Mankind. *Josephus*, in the Place before mention'd, owns it as the general Belief of all Sober and Considerate Persons at that Time. The absurd Fiction, of His being stolen away, was so gross, that even the Wiser Sort of the *Jews* soon gave it up; and our Modern Unbelievers are asham'd to have Recourse to it. Beside the utter Improbability, that they, who fled at His being Apprehended, and were afterwards overwhelm'd with Fear and Grief, should have the Courage to make such an Attempt against Armed Soldiers; 'tis impossible that the Possession of His Dead Body could have afforded them any Consolation; or that they should afterwards, with so much Undaunted Courage and Joyful Transport, expose themselves to the Rage of the *Jews*, and even to Death, if their Hope in His Promise, which gave the only Life to their Desponding Spirits,

had been frustrated. But He soon made good what He had so often Promis'd, by Appearing to them in His proper Human Body. To *Mary Magdalene*, and other Devout Women, who came earliest to the Sepulchre ; whose Report made little or no Impression on the Dejected Minds of the *Apostles*. Then, to *Simon Peter*, and to the Two Disciples going to *Emmaus*. Afterwards, to the whole Body of the *Apostles*, privately assembled, with the Door shut, for Fear of the *Jews* : And He appeal'd to the Evidence of their Senses as well as their Faith ; in so much, that *Thomas*, the most Diffident, fell into this rapturous Acknowledgment, *My Lord, and my God*. Likewise, to *Peter* and *John*, and other Disciples, at the Sea of *Tiberias*. To the Eleven *Apostles* upon Mount *Tabor* ; and to *an Hundred and Twenty*, consisting of His *Apostles* Disciples and Friends, who saw Him ascend to Heaven in the same Human Body, from the Mount of *Olives*. In this last *St. Luke* is so particular, in setting down the very Words spoken by *JESUS* before His Ascension, with the Manner of it ; their looking stedfastly after Him, till a Cloud intercepted their Sight ; the Appearance



pearance of Two *Angels*, and their Testimony concerning His future Return from Heaven; together with the Conduct of that great Body of Christians when they came back to *Jerusalem*; That if he had err'd in any Part of His Representation, 'twould have been Easy for their Enemies to have made great Advantage of it: And He well knew that they were Spiteful and Vigilant to catch at all Opportunities for exposing that Religion which they were bent to extirpate. He had therefore just Reason for asserting \* *That JESUS shewed himself alive after his Passion, by Many infallible Proofs; being seen for Forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of GOD: Since there were so Many proper Witnesses of it, of unquestionable Credit and Sincerity; Persons, whose only Comfort in this World, and Expectations in the Next, depended upon the Certainty of it: So that they were oblig'd to take the greatest Care, not to be impos'd upon themselves, and could not possibly have any Temptation to impose upon Others.*

Beside;

\* Acts i. 3.

Beside; The Certainty of these great Events is strongly prov'd by the sudden and amazing Change in their Conduct upon this Occasion. The same Persons, who had before shut Themselves up, for Fear of the *Jews* Resentments, now appear'd openly, and, with the greatest Presence of Mind, proclaim'd this *Resurrection* to the World, and even to the Face of the Chief Rulers at *Jerusalem*; asserting that They had seen and convers'd with their Blessed *Lord and Master*, as formerly; that they were indispensably Bound to preach Salvation in His Name; and were ready to sacrifice their Lives in the Defence of his Doctrine: So that Light and Darkness are not more contrary to each other, than the Conduct of these *Apostles* was, to what They had shewn but a little before. Upon this Astonishing Turn, *Pilate*, after strict Examination, got the whole Truth out of the Guard; who confess'd the Opening of the Sepulchre by the Earthquake; the visible Rising of *JESUS*; their own Terror and Consternation; and the wicked Bribery of the *Jewish* Rulers. These Particulars He transmitted to the Emperor *Tiberius*:  
On

On whom they made such Impression, that he communicated them to the *Senate*, and mov'd for a Decree, That *JESUS* should be admitted into the Number of the *Roman* Gods. And, upon the *Senate's* Refusal, he, not only exprefs'd his Resentment, but gave Liberty for All to Believe in *JESUS*; and forbad all his Officers, on Pain of Death, to molest Any Such, for their Affection and Zeal to that Name. *Tertullian*, in his *Apology*, asserts this from his own Knowledge; who, being a Man of Note and Interest at *Rome*, took his Account from the Publick Records: And \* *Hegesippus*, another ancient Writer, agrees with him in the same Narrative.

BUT there is Nothing, in which the Victorious Resurrection and Ascension, the infinite Wisdom and Power, and the Unchangeable Love Truth and Faithfulness of the Blessed and Gracious REDEEMER, are more conspicuous, than in the Tender and Provident Regard which He shew'd for the Weak Helpless



Helpless and Infant State of His Church, immediately after His Return to the Heavenly Glory. Notwithstanding the great Advantages of His Conversation and Divine Instructions, for above Three Years, the *Apostles* themselves were, as yet, weak in their Judgments and Apprehensions, as to the Great Affairs of His Kingdom; and had their Expectations too much turn'd towards a Peaceable and Flourishing State of it in this World: As appears from that over-curious and unseasonable Question, \* *Lord wilt Thou, at this Time, restore the Kingdom to Israel?* Yet, in Obedience to His Command, *They † returned to Jerusalem, and || continued together in Prayer*; waiting for the Accomplishment of His Promise. Their outward State was altogether helpless and disconsolate: The Name of JESUS was hated and despis'd: The People were inveterately set against them; and they had neither Wealth to support themselves, nor Friends to countenance and assist them: So that there was all the visible Prospect of their sinking under Poverty and Distress; be-  
side

\* Acts i. 6.

† ver. 12.

|| ver. 14.

side their being expos'd to the persecuting Malice of the *Jews*. But, within Ten Days after their LORD's Ascension, He fulfilled His Gracious Promise of sending the Divine Comforter, the HOLY GHOST, in a visible Extraordinary and Miraculous Manner. This fill'd their Hearts with Gladness, and their Mouths with Praise; banish'd all their Fears; and inspir'd them with an invincible Courage to preach openly to the World; and to despise all manner of Danger whereunto they might be expos'd. Tho' they were Men of low Capacities, and wanted those Embelishments of Learning which Mankind are wont to value and admire; yet this Defect was abundantly overballanc'd by an instantaneous Gift of Tongues, which enabled them to converse with People of all Nations in their several Languages, to the great Astonishment of the Hearers; who look'd upon it as Miraculous, and altogether above the Power of Nature. Nor was this all; but they were endu'd with extraordinary Gifts of Knowledge in the sublimest Mysteries; of Penetration into the Hearts of Men; of Prophecy, to foresee future Things; of Wisdom, to instruct

the Ignorant, and to convince or silence their Adversaries; and of working Miracles, to confirm the Truth of their Doctrine. All these surprising Matters of Fact were seen, observ'd, and acknowledg'd by vast Numbers of People; not only Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, but *Jews* assembl'd at that Time from many remote Parts of the World; whose Curiosity led them to be Eye Witnesses of an Event so extraordinary: Nor was the least Part of it ever contradicted, either by *Jewish* Writers, or any other of the Enemies of Christianity. A further eminent Proof of that Divine Power by which they were animated, appear'd in the full Conviction of *Three Thousand Jews* by one plain Discourse of St. Peter's; so as to lay aside their former Prejudices, and joyn themselves to the *Christian Church*; embracing with great Affection that Religion which they had before rejected and violently oppos'd. Such was the Increase of this *Little Flock*, so mean and despicable in its first Appearance, that 'tis observ'd by \* *Heathen* Historians, within Forty Years after the Gospel's

\* Tacit. l. 5. Sueton. in Vit. Neronis.



Gospel's first Plantation, all Parts of the World were full of Christians. And yet the ruling Powers were then so far from contributing to this wonderful Increase, that they labour'd, by all the Methods of Violence and Cruelty, to prevent it: Infomuch that the Converts to this Religion, had no other Views as to this World, than the Hazard of their Ease, and of every Thing that was valuable, with their Lives too; which they generally resign'd, not only with Patience, but with the greatest Transports of Joy. Thus, the Blessed JESUS, by a *Doctrine* which was contrary to Flesh and Blood, and to all the Gratifications of this Life, made a greater Conquest upon the Hearts of Men, than all the *Monarchs* upon Earth ever did by the common Allurements of Wealth Honour or Power. All which He effected by mean and despicable Instruments; whom He enabled to surmount all Difficulties, and to baffle the utmost Policy Opposition and Malice of the whole World. Their Miracles, their Preaching, and their Lives, plainly appear'd to be the Credentials of Heaven: So that they subdu'd the Great without Power, and the Men of chief Repute for

Wisdom and Science, without Learning or Study.

ACCORDING to the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, the *Messiah* promised to the *Jews*, was to rise again from the *Dead*. To These therefore *St. Paul* alludes, when He declares it an Essential Part of the Gospel which he preach'd, That \* *CHRIST died for our Sins, was Buried, and rose again the Third Day according to the Scriptures*; and thereby gave the most convincing Proof of that Almighty Power, by which He will raise all Mankind. Holy *Job* seems to have had a full Assurance of This, and to have counted it an overballance to all His Calamities. † *I know* (says He) *that my REDEEMER liveth, and that He shall stand at the Latter Day upon the Earth*: And He adds, *Tho' after my Skin Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see G O D*. This was likewise the Principal Drift of that eminently inspir'd King and Prophet, || *Thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell* [Or in the Grave, as the Original Word signifies]

\* 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.  
Psal. xvi. 10.

† Job xix. 25, 26.

signifies] *nor suffer Thine Holy One to see Corruption.* Which Words are by all Interpreters applied to the Death and Resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, of whom *David* was an eminent Type: For they neither were fulfilled in him, nor could be limited to him. He indeed mentions his Hope in God, that he would at length deliver him from his great Distresses, and not suffer him to perish under Them: But then he was carried by a Spirit of Prophecy, to express himself in much higher Terms than could possibly relate to his own person, *viz.* a Resurrection from Death so speedy as that the Body should not putrify: Whereas he himself *died, and was gather'd to his Fathers, and suffer'd Corruption*; as \* *St. Paul* has observ'd from this Place, when he applies it to Our SAVIOUR'S Resurrection, as being compleatly verified in him. † *St. Peter* likewise, in that memorable and most convincing Discourse to the *Jews*, which gain'd so vast a Number of Converts has so explain'd and applied it. Very remarkable also is that Passage of Sacred Prophecy, denoting the Resurrection

\* Acts xiii. 36.

† Ibid. ii. 31.



tion of CHRIST, and, thro' Him, of all the Faithful, — \* *Thy Dead Men shall live; together with my Dead Body shall They arise: Awake and sing Ye that dwell in the Dust.* For, beside the general Resurrection at the Last Day, to which this seems more especially to refer, 'twas eminently verified in the Resurrection of those Holy Persons who, according to the Testimony of the *Evangelists*, were releas'd from their Graves at the Time of Our SAVIOUR'S Death, and, after appearing to their intimate Friends, were translated into the Mansions of Glory. And as nothing can be more unquestionable than that the Disciples and others immediate Attendants of their Blessed Lord and Master, had the most convincing Evidence and the fullest Assurance of these extraordinary Events: So there is the strongest Reason imaginable to believe that they were very sincere and faithful in the Declarations which they have left to the World concerning them. For they were Men of great Plainness and Integrity, and acknowledg'd their own Weakness in being backward

\* Isai. xxvi. 19,

ward to believe this Great Article, on which all their Comfort and Hopes were founded, 'till they had the most clear and infallible Proof of it. That they did afterwards firmly believe it, from such Demonstrations as could not possibly deceive them, is most certain. What other Reason can be given for their undaunted Boldness in owning Him after he was Crucified and Dead; who had all appear'd so full of Fear at his being apprehended, as to flee and leave Him alone in the Hands of His Enemies? Even that timerous *Apostle*, who had shamefully disown'd Him at the Challenge of a Maid-Servant, tells the Chief Rulers of the *Jews* to their Faces \* that *God had raised Him up whom they had crucified; and thro' Faith in Him was that Miracle wrought on the impotent Man*, which they then beheld with the utmost Astonishment. What could make them so industrious to propagate the Doctrine and Resurrection of CHRIST, if they had not the fullest Assurance of the Truth of it themselves? How could they think to convince the obstinate *Jews* that he was

\* Acts iv. 10.



was risen from the Dead, whom they had lately seen expiring upon the Cross, and challeng'd in Derision to save Himself if He was able? Or how could they expect that the *Gentiles* should believe in Him, whom the People of his own Nation had rejected despis'd and deliver'd up to the vilest and most ignominious Death? Certainly they could not, with any Reason, hope to succeed in this Undertaking, without a mighty and even a Divine Encouragement, drawn from the Certainty of His Resurrection; and an unshaken Faith, that He, who had Power to raise Himself from the Dead, could also make all Difficulties flee before them, and crown their faithful Labours with Success. Nothing short of such Assurance could have enabl'd them to persist with such unwearied Diligence and Firmness of Resolution, in bearing a Testimony which They found the World so unwilling to believe; and the malicious *Jews* so violently bent to root out by the severest Persecutions. When they saw St. *Stephen* furiously ston'd to Death; St. *James*, one of their own select Number, slain by the Sword; St. *Peter* imprison'd, and design'd for the Slaughter; and



and had reason every One of them to expect the same Usage; Flesh and Blood, and the greatest Strength of mere Human Resolution, without the assistance of a Divine and Victorious Faith, must needs have sunk under it. But they willingly submitted to \* *Stripes above measure, to cruel Mockings and Imprisonments; and to pass their Time in Weariness and Painfulness, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness: Esteeming it their highest Honour and Happiness † to know CHRIST in the Power of His Resurrection, in the Fellowship of His Sufferings, and to be made conformable to His Death.* Thus they were || *Crucified to the World, and the World to them; and they \*\* counted not their Lives dear unto them, so as to come in competition with their Duty, and the Love which they bore to their Blessed Master; that they might finish their Course with Joy, and the Testimony which they had received from Him.* All this amounts to an invincible Proof both of the Strength of their Faith, and the Sincerity of those Declarations which they made of it to the  
T World.

\* 2 Cor. xi. 23, 26, 27.

† Phil. iii. 10.

|| Gal. vi. 14.

\*\* Acts xx. 24.

World. But, beside these Things, they had (as I before observ'd) the visible and extraordinary Credentials of Heaven, and the unquestionable Testimony of G O D Himself to the Truth of their Divine Message, in the many Miracles which they wrought; such as Healing the Sick, striking some with sudden Death, others with Blindness, and raising the Dead to Life. And 'tis observable, that these Miracles were wrought among the people, and not done in secret; not before a Few, but before a vast Multitude; not only in the Presence and Sight of those who were their Friends, and Favourers of the G O S P E L which they preached, but in the View of its bitterest Enemies; who watched all Opportunities to disparage it, and yet were forced to acknowledge these corroborating Matters of Fact. They added a further Credit to their Testimony by shewing that 'twas in all Things perfectly agreeable to the Writings of *the Law and the Propbets*; wherein all those Wonderful Events had been foretold. If they had advanced any thing contrary to that Divine Standard of Truth, or endeavoured to promote

mote their own Honour or Advantage, they might justly have been rejected as Deceivers, by the *Jewish* Law. But they always refus'd the Honour which the World would have given them upon the account of their Miracles, and ascribed whatsoever was done by their Means, to the Name and Power of **JESUS CHRIST**. What added a Lustre to their Miracles, was, that none of the Deceits of Magic, which were then very rife among the *Gentile* World, nor the Practisers of that Diabolical Art could stand before them. *Simon Magus*, by those Practices, had so far deluded the Citizens of *Samaria*, that they imagin'd them to have proceeded from \* *the great Power of GOD*: But when *Philip* came, and Preach'd the **GOSPEL** among them, confirming his Doctrine with real Miracles, and such as were visibly wrought by a Divine Power; they soon cast off the Impostor, and with great Joy embrac'd the Christian Doctrine and Faith; and even the Sorcerer himself became a Convert to it. *St. Paul* likewise encountring with *Elymas*, another Sorcerer at *Cyprus*, and being justly provok'd by his Opposition to the

T 2

GOSPEL,

\* Acts viii. 10.



GOSPEL, threatned him from GOD with immediate Blindness; which was inflicted on him in that very instant. So far did the Preaching and Miracles of the Apostles prevail against those Delusions of the Devil, and so powerfully convinc'd the Practitioners in that Wicked Art, \* that they brought forth their Books, which had been accounted of great Value, and publicly burnt them. That these were real Matters of Fact, is beyond all reasonable Question: Since, if they had been otherwise, nothing was more easy than to have disprov'd them, and thereby to have disparag'd the whole Credit of *Christianity*. But, beside these great and undeniable Instances of a Divine Power attending the Blessed *Apostles*; the Purity of their Doctrine and the exemplary Course of their Lives, who with great exactness practis'd what they taught, had a mighty influence upon their Success: For their Miracles, their Instructions, and the constant Tenor of their Lives being perfectly agreeable in all Things, were of great Force to strengthen and recommend each other. And it cannot reasonably be imagin'd, even by those who are  
prone

\* Acts xix. 19.

prone to make cavilling Objections, that GOD would so eminently have vouchsafed them His immediate Power Assistance and Blessing, if they had gone about to impose a Falsity on the World: For this is inconsistent with the inseparable Attributes of the Supreme BEING; who is the Eternal Fountain of Truth and Holiness, and has propos'd the unchangeable Rectitude of His Moral Perfections as a Rule and Pattern to all Reasonable Creatures.

THAT Memorable Instance of *St. Paul*, if consider'd singly, is sufficient to convince every considerate and unprejudiced Person, of the Eternal Deity and infinite Power of JESUS CHRIST, and of the Divine Authority of His Doctrine. When he was going to *Damascus*, in the full Career of His Persecuting Zeal, prompted more by his own Inclinations than by the *High Priest's* Commission, he was suddenly stop'd by an amazing *Light from Heaven* \*, which exceeded the Brightness of the Sun; and by an audible Voice, expostulating with him, in the *Hebrew* Tongue

\* Acts xxvi. 13, 14. *Ibid.* Chap. ix. 3, to the 10th Verse.

Tongue, upon the Rashness of his Undertaking, and directing him, as to his Future Conduct. His Companions *heard the Voice*, were struck down by the Light as well as he, and, when recovered from their Fright and Amazement, led him Blind into the City. Thus far they were Witnesses of an Event altogether astonishing in itself: And the Change which immediately follow'd, in the Temper of his Soul, and in his devoting himself to the Service of that Religion which he had so violently hated and oppos'd, very soon appear'd to all Men; and plainly shew'd his intire Obedience to that Extraordinary Divine Call. His succeeding Labours, unparallel'd Sufferings, indefatigable Travels, and wonderful Success in Propagating the Christian Faith, and confuting the most Learned Opposers of it, were so universally known; not only throughout *Judæa*, but in the chief Cities of *Syria*, *Lyconia*, and of *Greece*, and especially at *Rome*; that, if those Sacred Monuments of them, recorded by *St. Luke*, had not been exactly true, 'tis most certain That the *Jews*, those restless and avow'd Enemies to him and to the Christian Religion, would not have slip'd such an



an Opportunity of disparaging the Credit of it before all Mankind. To all which might be added, the Dreadful Calamities of that perverse and obstinate Nation; foretold them, in the most pathetic Manner, by the Blessed JESUS, the Heavenly Minister of Peace and Love, at a Time when they were in perfect Amity with the *Romans*, and seem'd most secure from any such Danger; and afterwards literally fulfill'd, within the Space of an Age, to their utter Desolation, and Dispersion into all Countries over the Face of the whole Earth; as the just Consequence of that Horrid Imprecation, *His Blood be on us, and on our Children.* And now, will any of our Modern *Sceptics* be so Hardy, and so devoid of common Reason, as to question the Certainty of all those Great and Wonderful Events, relating to the Plantation and Happy Progress of Christianity; which are prov'd by much stronger and more unexceptionable Evidence than any other Historical Matters, so Ancient, throughout the World? Or, if they should vouchsafe their Assent to the Truth of them; will they dare to impute Things so Extraordinary, and above the common Course

Course of Nature and Providence, to the Power of *Enthusiasm*? Could That, have enabled those Weak and Helpless Instruments to work such Miracles as the World had never seen, before the Appearance of CHRIST on Earth; to confound the Wisdom of the most Learned Philosophers; to overthrow Idolatry, and to triumph over all the Powers of Darknes, by the single Name of their Blessed Lord and Master? Will they censure St. *Paul* for an Enthusiast; who, with the greatest Temper Prudence and Conduct, and with the strongest Reasoning, was too Hard for all his Learned *Jewish* Opponents; for the Oratory of *Tertullus*, and the most Celebrated Disputants at *Athens*, the Chief Seat of Learning and Science at that Time in the World? Will they charge the infinite Number of Converts, in all Places and Countries; the whole Provinces and Kingdoms, and, even, the *Roman Empire*, with *Enthusiasm*; for embracing the Faith, and submitting to the Laws of a Crucified SAVIOUR; who had so clearly manifested the Happy End of His Wonderful Humiliation, as absolutely necessary for the Reconciliation and Final Happiness

Happiness of Mankind? Will they censure as Enthusiasts, such Vast and Numberless Bodies of Men, planted in different and remote Countries, and living in the most orderly Subjection, in all Temporal Matters, to the Civil Powers which they were under; and in Spirituals, to the Delegates of their Supreme *Law-giver*, acting in Pursuance of the Holy Rules prescrib'd by Him? 'Twould much better become those Unreasonable Cavillers, to confess their groundless Prejudices; and, with Modesty and Thankfulness, to submit to the Gracious Methods of the Divine Wisdom and Love, in revealing to Mankind the only Way and Means of Salvation.

FOR, whatever such unhappy Persons may fondly think of their own Case, 'tis certain, That their Minds are infected with as much more Dangerous a Leprosy than that of *Naaman's* Body, as they exceed him in Pride and Obstinacy. He indeed prefer'd *the Rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar, before the Waters of Israel*; and angrily hesitated a while at the Inspir'd Direction: But, upon second Thoughts, he relented, obey'd, and

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found his Cure. Whereas these, not only prefer the Rivers of *Greece* and *Rome*, the Fine Flourishes and Eloquent Discourses of the Old Philosophers, before the Waters of Life, *i. e.* Those Holy Rules of Faith and Practice, which were given by Divine Inspiration, and fancy them better suited to restore and perfect Human Nature; but also resolutely persist in their unhappy Choice, tho' it be apparently the Result of affected Ignorance and wilful Perverseness: For, in the Sacred Writings are contain'd the only perfect Rules for Moral Duties, as well as those Supernatural Doctrines which are necessary to be known and believ'd in order to Salvation. 'Twere greatly to be wish'd that Moral Vertue had more sincere Admirers, and were more generally courted and practis'd by Mankind: Yet, if we fairly trace this Sort of Advocates for it, we shall find none in Reality greater Strangers thereto; None more Dissolute, and intirely given up to the Debasing Pleasures and Gratifications of Sense. But, supposing the Best that can be imagin'd, *i. e.* That the Aims and Actions of this Sort of Men were truly sincere and unmask'd, and their Arguments

ments for the All-sufficiency of Human Reason were never so fine, smooth, and plausible; since they boldly strike at the only Foundation and Blessed *Medium* of our Pardon Peace Acceptance and Reconciliation with GOD, by effacing that Fundamental Article of His Divine Essence and Eternal Deity, on which the Vertue Fulness and infinite Merits of His Sacrifice, with the Efficacy of His Intercession, immediately depend, and exalting a Natural Light in Opposition thereunto; such Dangerous Seducers, beside the Legal Censures to which they are liable, ought to bear a Brand of public Infamy in the general Esteem of Mankind; that their Conversation may be avoided, or, at least, guarded against, with as much Care as the Infection of a Pestilential Air.

THOSE Unhappy and Deluded Persons, who are so conceited of the Strength and Conduct of their own Reason in Matters Divine and Spiritual, would do well to consider, That Reason, which, in its Original Purity, was an inferior Light, and insufficient for the perfect Knowledge of GOD, is, since the Fall of Man, very

much weaken'd and obscur'd. Every Herb, Flower, Mineral, and even the meanest Insect, has Mystery enough to puzzle and silence this Discerning Faculty, which Men value themselves so much upon. And if we cannot fully understand the Nature Production and Usefulness of These, shall we presume to comprehend the Infinite Author of them? Can the Eye of Reason penetrate into all the Wonders of the Human Frame? Can it discover the Vital Bands, by which the Soul and Body are so intimately united? Can it account for the wonderful Power of representing absent Objects; and forming *Ideas* of that which we never saw? If we then are not able to know ourselves, what an Height of Folly must it be, to imagine that we know GOD? As we are Finite Beings, there is some Proportion between the Things of Nature, and the narrow Conceptions of our Minds; tho' we cannot attain to a perfect Knowledge of them: But who is sufficient to unfold the Divine Attributes? Some of them can't be express'd without Distinction, as Wisdom and Power; nor others, without a seeming Opposition, as Justice and Mercy: Yet they are the same  
Divine



Divine Nature, and cannot be separated but in our Thoughts. He, who made and upholds all Things, is Eternal without Succession; and perfectly foresees all Causes and Events with One Comprehensive View: But let Vile Dependent Worms confess that such Knowledge is too wonderful for them. To believe no more concerning GOD, and the Manifestation of His Holy Attributes and Will, than what they can form a clear Solution of; proceeds from great Ignorance, both of the Divine Nature and of their own: For that is Infinite and Incomprehensible; but their Minds are at best but Shallow Contracted and Finite.

So weak and imperfect are the present Remains of that pure and unclouded Reason which was originally implanted in Human Nature, That, instead of assisting the Soul aright in its Feeble Efforts of looking up towards the Eternal Fountain of Blessedness, without a Superior Guide 'tis at Best sadly prone, either by assuming too much in a presumptuous Attempt upon the sublimest Mysteries of Faith, or by sinking beneath its just Pre-rogative into an unworthy Compliance with

with the Organs of Sense, to conspire the Destruction of its Well-being. Where it puts on the fairest Visage, and makes the greatest Advances towards subduing the sensitive Appetites and irregular Passions, and restoring a Moral Tranquillity to the Mind; 'tis so far from Rooting out the most Dangerous Corruption, lurking in those secret Springs of Pride Ostentation and an imaginary Self-sufficiency, that it rather tends to cherish and indulge them: Since 'tis scarce more natural for a Man to breathe, than, under the pleasing Speculations of his own Improvements, to arrogate to himself the Praise of his over-valu'd Wisdom and Vertue. So that all this, duly consider'd, amounts to little more than a Fine Flourish, without any just Proportion of intrinsic Worth to recommend it; in comparison of that sound Knowledge, Self-denial, Meekness, Charity and universal Goodness, which eminently belong to the Evangelical Dispensation, and are the proper Lineaments of the Divine Image, or the very Life and Soul of true Religion. 'Tis therefore evident, that Pride and Self-confidence, which first excluded Man from the Divine Favour, are the

the greatest Hindrance to his regaining it, and the true Reason why so many are unwilling to embrace the most advantageous Sacred Truth with a firm Assent, on the Authority of a Divine Testimony: But they will presume to gain Heaven in the Bye Ways of their own Invention; despising that Essential Doctrine of the Cross, which was sent on Purpose to shew them the true Way thither, and those supernatural Aids which are absolutely necessary to guide and assist them. Nor can any Thing be more Deplorable than the Consequence of such Unhappy Conduct: For, tho' the Case of such as have always liv'd in Times and Places of Ignorance, wherein the Blessed *Medium* of obtaining Spiritual Life and Peace has been altogether unknown, (especially such as, in a general Belief of God's Mercy, made the Best of that Measure of Knowledge they enjoy'd) will admit of Gracious and Favourable Allowances; since the Light of Nature will be the only Rule of their Judgment: 'Tis most certain that these, who, under the clearest Evangelical Light and Knowledge, contemptuously resign themselves to the Guidance of that Deprav'd Worldly



ly Wisdom which is directly contrary thereunto, will unavoidably fall under the most insupportable Weight of Guilt and Condemnation; when those Sacred Testimonies of the infinite Wisdom Goodness Patience and Love of GOD, which they have so unworthily despis'd, shall be made both the Rule and Measure of their Final Judgment, and the Chief Ground of their Condemnation.

SUCH is the Goodness and Condescension of the Supreme and Omniscient BEING, that those Duties which are necessary for us to know and practise, in order to Salvation, are very plain, and lie level to the meanest Capacities. As to the sublimer Doctrines of *Faith*, which the Holy Scripture tells us, \* *is the Evidence of Things not seen*: They indeed require a modest and humble Assent of our Minds to them, so far as they are reveal'd, upon the single Testimony and Divine Authority of the Revealer; tho' some of them surpass our present Comprehension, as to their Nature and Manner of subsistence; being reserv'd, for a more explicate Knowledge, to that  
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\* Heb. xi. 1.

Blessed State Above, wherein our Capacities shall receive a suitable Enlargement. To this Faith, \* *without which 'tis impossible to please God*, our Rational Faculties are subservient: For the same Reason which forbids us to believe Things evidently contradictory to our Understanding and Senses, (such as the absurd Doctrine of Transubstantiation) requires us to believe Things above our Comprehension, when GOD Himself has reveal'd the Certainty of them to us, and declar'd that they are Incomprehensible. To believe that JESUS CHRIST, who gave His Life a Ransom for Mankind, is perfect GOD and perfect Man, is requisite to our Participation in that inestimable Benefit: But, to comprehend the Manner of that Mysterious Union of the Two Distinct Natures in Him, is neither possible nor profitable to us. Therefore they who will believe Nothing in Religion, but what they can demonstrate and explain by Mathematical Reasoning, let them pretend what they will, can neither have a right Notion of the Thing it self, nor a due Veneration for its Glorious Author. And whilst there

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\* Heb. xi. 6.

are Myſteries in the common Works of Nature and Providence, which theſe nice Pretenders to Reaſon cannot account for; 'tis an amazing as well as an unwarrantable Preſumption for them to imagine that they can comprehend the Infinite Perfections of the Supreme BEING.

THAT moſt Comfortable Doctrine of the *Incarnation*, which is equally full of Wonder and Love, together with the Happy Conſequents of it, is ſo clearly and frequently aſſerted in the Inſpir'd Writings, both before and after the Accompliſhment of it; that 'tis the Chief Scope and Deſign of Them, by this admirable Method, to illuſtrate the Glory of the Divine Attributes in the Reconciliation and Final Happineſs of Mankind. And Faith in the infinitely Bleſſed and Incomprehenſible TRINITY, is ſo expreſſly requir'd by the GOSPEL, that it makes up the very Form and Eſſence of Baptiſm; which is a Fundamental Part of it, and plainly proves Them to be of the ſame Divine Nature, and Indiviſible Eſſence Authority and Power. So that we may be fully aſſur'd, 'Tis impoſſible for the Eter-  
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nal Son of GOD, who is \* *the Way, the Truth and the Life*, to have so plainly reveal'd this Sublime, but most Comfortable Doctrine, and enjoyn'd an Adorable Belief of it, if it had not been a most Certain Fundamental and Infallible Truth. And it must needs become Frail and Dependent Beings, who cannot by their utmost Searches, comprehend or account for many of the Wonders in Nature, instead of endeavouring a Solution of These *re Bddn*, or † *Deep Things of God*, by subjecting them to the narrow Limits of their Finite Understanding, with the deepest Humility and Thankfulness to assent to Them, upon the Authority of Him, who is the Eternal Fountain of Truth and Holiness. Therefore every One whom the Gospel Dispensation has reach'd, is strictly and indispensably requir'd to || *Believe in the Son of God*; and to obey that Revelation of the Divine Will which He has made to Mankind: And they are further assur'd, That without Faith in Him, and Obedience to Him, as such, they are altogether incapable of Salvation. So that, to reject or disparage the Testimony which He has given of the Divinity of

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\* John xiv. 6, \* 1 Cor. ii. 10. || Joh. viii. 24.

His Person and Doctrine, is no less than to Despise Him, and to cast the highest Contempt upon the Infinite Wisdom Goodness and Love of GOD. It robs Him, both of His Essential Glory which He possessed \* *before the World was*, and of that peculiar Glory which He acquir'd by the wonderful Work of our Redemption. And, however Vain Conceited and Prejudic'd Minds may at present flatter themselves in their own Delusions, they will be at last terribly convinc'd That † Infidelity, under the Meridian of the Blessed GOSPEL, is that Great and Condemning Sin, which will admit of no Plea or Excuse before GOD.

SOME have been so Unreasonable, as to form Objections against the Divine Authority and Inspiration of the Holy Scripture, from a pretended Lowness of Style, and Want of Order, Method, and Connexion: As if the infinitely Wise and Omnipotent BEING were oblig'd to stoop to the nice Rules, and imaginary Improvements of vain and conceited Men. But, how groundless those Objections are will readily appear to every fair and unprejudic'd

\* John xvii. 5. † *Ibid.* iii. 18, 19.



unprejudic'd Reader: Since there is no greater Strength of Eloquence, Justness of Thought, and Majesty of Expression, to be found in any other Writings, merely Human, throughout the World; nor indeed comparable to what appears in many Parts of those Sacred Compositions, both in the *Old Testament* and the *New*. Yet, in this respect, it must be allow'd That there is not an equal Strain of Elegancy running thro' all the Parts of Them; nor is it reasonable for any to think it should be so: For, the Variety and different Nature of the Subjects treated of, requir'd a suitable Variation in the Manner. *Dionysius Longinus*, in his Rules for a true Sublimity of Style \*, takes notice of that Expression of *Moses*, † *God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light*, — as an Instance so truly Great and Sublime, that 'twas incapable of Improvement, either in Majesty or Beauty. Nor can any Thing be more Awful or Majestic than that Introduction of *Isaiah* to his Evangelical Prophecy, --- *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth: For the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up*  
*Children,*

\* Sect. 8.

† Gen. i. 3.



*Children, and they have rebelled against me.* Numberless Instances of such a true Greatness both of Thought and Expression, might be collected from the same Prophet; and from *Jeremiah, Daniel, Micah, Habakkuk, Malachi*; from the Book of *Deuteronomy*, of *Job*, of the *Psalms*, and from the Writings of *St. Luke*, and *St. Paul*: Which from the Strength and Sublimity both of the Matter and Style, and especially from the Excellent Design which runs thro' their whole Performances, are beyond comparison, superior to any Thing that is to be found among the most fam'd *Heathen Philosophers Orators* or *Poets*. Where is there a greater Justness of Thought and Diction, a more Masterly Way of Reasoning or finer Flights of Rhetoric, or more strong and beautiful Similes, to be found among the most celebrated profane Writers, than in the Book of *Job*: Especially in those *Chapters*, wherein he sets off, by way of *Antithesis*, the Two vastly different States of Life which he had pass'd thro'; the One highly prosperous, and the Other extreamly calamitous? Can any one Thing be more truly Noble, and becoming a Human Mind,  
than

than his copious and elegant Description of the infinite Wisdom Power Sovereignty and untraceable Providence of the Supreme BEING; together with his own Abasement, upon just and suitable Reflections thereon, which appears in the Close of that Excellent Book? Where is there any Thing to be found, so truly Awful and Sublime, and so excellently suited to raise the Passions into a due Reverence of the Divine Attributes; as in the Songs of *Moses*, and that of *Deborah*; and in the Prophetic Vision of *Habakkuk*, with his rapturous Acknowledgments thereupon? Or what can equal that lively Illustration of the Glory Majesty Omnipotence and condescending Goodness of the Great Creator and Preserver of all Things; eminently pointing out the Eternal Kingdom of the *Messiah*, and intermixt with the most affecting Strains of the purest Devotion and Praise; which the Divine *Psalmist* so plentifully abounds with; especially in the xviii<sup>th</sup>, and lxxxix<sup>th</sup> *Psalms*? As to the *New Testament*; The Style of it is not only unexceptionable, but Strong Beautiful and Easy; the Reasoning clear, and justly preferable to what appears in most other Writings



Writings in the World; and the Excellent Drift which shines thro' the whole Composition, infinitely superior to them all. 'Twould perhaps puzzle the most captious Critics among the whole Cavilling Tribe, to find in any of their Favourite Authors a truer Elegance of Style and Expression, or a stronger and more cogent Way of Reasoning, than appears thro' the whole Writings of St. *Luke* and St. *Paul*; and particularly in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. But if it had been otherwise: What can the finest Flights of Human Invention, or the most Masterly Turns of Wit, avail towards the Attainment of Man's Ultimate Happiness? To this, the main Drift of the Sacred Volume is admirable suited, and manifestly directed. It speaks Home to the Conscience; shews Men the Corruption of their Nature, the Original Dignity of it, and the Great Design of their Being; with the true and only Means of attaining that High and Glorious End. It gives them a sure Prospect of that Eternal Happiness or Misery which will be the Portion of every Reasonable Creature in another World, according to their different Behaviour in this; together with  
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the most Plain and Equitable Rules for their present Conduct, in order to obtain the One, and avoid the Other. Can any Thing be more Clear and Strong, more agreeable to the purest Reason, or less liable to Cavil, than such Expressions as these: \* *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good: And what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD? — † Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and thy Neighbour as thy self.--* || *Follow Peace with all Men; and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the LORD.—* \*\* *But, without Faith, it is impossible to please Him.—* \*\*\* *This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, That JESUS CHRIST came into the World to save Sinners.—* †† *And whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have Everlasting Life? —* Is there any Thing comparable to this to be found among the Precepts of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Lycurgus, Solon, or any other celebrated Philosophers or Lawgivers? Now, if Men will perversely

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\* Mic. vi. 8.

† Luke x. 27.

|| Heb. xii. 14.

\*\* Heb. xi. 6.

\*\*\* 1 Tim. i. 15.

†† John iii. 16.

turn their Backs upon such *plain* and Advantageous Testimonies as These, they wilfully rank themselves among \* *those that are lost*; in whom the God of this World hath blinded their Eyes, lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of CHRIST, who is the Image of GOD, should shine unto them.

As to the Order and Method of these Divine Writings: 'Tis so far from being liable to any just Objections, that 'tis, on the contrary, both very admirable in itself, and every way worthy of their Supreme Author. They begin with the Formation of this visible World, and of Man, the Master-piece and Deputed Governor of it: With the perfect Happiness and Glorious Privileges of his First Estate, and the sad Effects of his Voluntary Disobedience. They acquaint us with his Numerous Descendents; with the extream Corruption of the whole Human Race; and with the heavy Weight of the Divine Anger, which they drew down upon themselves. Then they inform us how the World was re-peopled from a single Family; and of GOD's Distinguishing Favour shewn to One Person, eminent for

\* 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

for Faith and Piety, by Singular and Extraordinary Promises, and establishing a Covenant of Obedience with him and his Posterity; Of his choosing them as a peculiar People; making known His Gracious Purposes towards them, and, after a long Course of His Merciful Care and Providence, forming them into a State of Holy Government, and appointing them a Body of Excellent Laws for their Religious and Civil Conduct; which had a special Regard to that Great Promise of the *Messiah*, and to the Blessings and Benefits which should attend His Manifestation. They also afford us a compleat History of this select Church, and of the Divine Superintendence over it; together with its Great Degeneracy and Corruption, its Captivity and merciful Restoration. They further acquaint us with GOD's Gracious Dealings towards them from Age to Age; in sending His Holy *Prophets*, to admonish them of their Sins, and of their Duty; of their Danger, and of those heavy Judgments which would be the Consequence of their wilful Obstinacy and Disobedience; and to prepare them for the Approaches of the *Messiah*, and of His Kingdom, as the Time of His actual



Manifestation drew near. They proceed then to give us an exact Account of the Accomplishment of that great Promise concerning the Blessed REDEEMER and SAVIOUR; which had been so early made, so often renew'd and confirm'd, and so long expected for many Ages past: Of His immaculate Conception and Birth; of His Holy Life and Doctrine; of His Miracles and Sufferings; of His Death, Resurrection and Ascension; of His Planting and Establishing His Church, in a more pure and perfect Form of Doctrine Discipline and Worship, and under the most excellent Institutions, plainly significant in Themselves, and suited to the general Capacities of Mankind; so as to invite and admit into the Fellowship of it every True Believer, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, without Distinction: And likewise, of His appointing, in a special Manner, His Chosen *Apostles* and their Successors to *Teach and Baptize all Nations*, and to instruct them in the Great Affairs relating to His Kingdom, and to the Final Consummation of it. And, Lastly, They afford us a Faithful History of the Actions Conduct and Sufferings of those Heavenly Missionaries, in the Discharge of

of that Great Trust committed to them: Of their unwearied Labours and Diligence in Propagating the Christian Faith and Doctrine; in preserving its Purity; in establishing particular Churches thro'out all Nations and Countries, consisting of *Jewish* and *Gentile* Converts, upon the Terms of Repentance Faith and Evangelical Obedience; and Confirming them in that Holy Doctrine and Discipline, both by Personal Visits, and by their Monitory Epistles; that they might chearfully undergo the great Hardships and Sufferings which should attend the Militant State of the Church in general thro'out After-Ages: And more especially, Of their settling a perpetual Succession of Men duly qualified, and peculiarly set apart for the carrying on of that Sacred Work, unto the End of the World. And now, is it possible for any Method or Connexion of Things, to be more Orderly, more Reasonable, and every way tending to illustrate the infinite Wisdom Goodness and Love of GOD; or more highly Advantageous to Mankind? But such is the Malignity, such the astonishing Pride and wilful Perverseness of some Men, that Nothing will satisfy them but opposing



opposing their own wild and extravagant Conceptions to the Highest, the most Awful, and Endearing Instances of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness; and endeavouring, like the Fallen Angels, to make the rest of Mankind as compleatly Miserable as themselves.

WHAT other System of Divine Knowledge was ever comparable to This, for Order Beauty and Usefulness? It gives a Faithful Representation of Man to himself; as to the Original Dignity, the Corruption, the Recovery, and the Ultimate Advancement of his Nature: It informs him truly of his contracted Weakness and Misery, and then administers to him sure Consolation and Hope; shews him his Disease, with the Danger of it, and lays before him an effectual Remedy against it. It contains many admirable Prophetic Revelations, confirm'd and exactly accomplish'd, after a long Succession of Time, by the most certain and unquestionable Events; whose Happy End is the Final Salvation of the Creature, and Glorifying of the CREATOR. The Excellent Design, the Rational Connexion, the Strength and Majesty of Matter



ter and Style, the Antiquity and the Duration which eminently appear throughout the whole Wonderful Composition, do so evidently concur in proving its Divine Authority; that, to every impartial Mind, the DEITY it self seems plainly dictating to us, by the Lips and Pens of Men whose Thoughts were in an extraordinary manner rais'd above the utmost Powers of Nature. Neither has the Truth of any History of the most Flourishing Empires on Earth, been so much strengthen'd by its greatest Friends and Admirers, as This has been accidentally by its Enemies and Opposers. What other, of the most Celebrated Histories, begins with the World; continues from Age to Age through the whole Circle of Time; speaks of Things to come, as if they were actually present; shews the Veracity of every Thing foretold, by an exact Accomplishment, and ends with the World it self? And how justly then may this be esteem'd the Only Way of Salvation; the sure Guide to Heaven; and every One who strives to ascend thither by any other Way, is no better than an infatuated or designing Impostor! In a Word: This is the Only perfect

perfect Model of Example and Precept, and the Source of all true Peace Comfort and Hope to Mankind; as it not only shews them, in the clearest Light imaginable, both the Supreme Good and the Final Misery of which they are capable; but, also directs and enables them, in the right Use of it, to obtain the One and avoid the Other. 'Tis the true Paradise, mercifully restor'd to the Descendants of *Adam*; wherein grows \* *the Tree of Life, whose Leaves are for the Healing of the Nations.*

A serious and becoming Reflexion on the great Degeneracy and Impotency of Human Nature, and the dismal Tendency of it, from which Men are happily freed by a right Application of the Evangelical Doctrine and Promises; is necessary to give us a just Value of them. So long as any Persons remain under those strong Prejudices which naturally arise from the settled Apprehensions of GOD as an implacable Enemy, 'tis impossible for them to cherish any regular Desires or Disposition to return towards Him: For Confusion and Terror are always inseparable

\* Rev. xxii. 2.

separable from a prevailing Sense of Guilt, and inextricable Danger. But thro' the whole System of this most Delightful and Heavenly Doctrine of the Evangelical Grace and Love exhibited to Mankind, the Honour of GOD is represented as fully repair'd; His Justice compleatly satisfi'd; and not only His Willingness, but His Delightful Propension to pardon, upon sincere Repentance, in the most lively and pathetic Manner proclaim'd: And all These confirm'd by the highest Instance of Love (far surpassing the Conceptions of Men or Angels) the unspeakable Gift of His Son; who finish'd the Hard Work of Redemption on His Cross, pass'd thro' the disconsolate Vale of Death, rose again in Triumph, and advancing the Human Nature to the Glory Above, became *the First-fruits* and most comfortable Pledge of a Blessed Resurrection to all that *Sleep in Him*. Thus the Almighty has condescended to *draw Men with the strongest Cords of His Love*; to conquer their natural Aversion; to dissipate their Fears; to increase their Faith; to set before them the most powerful Motives to a chearful Obedience; to guide them by the Counsel of His Word



and Precepts ; to follow them with the necessary Aids of His Holy Spirit ; and at last bring them to the Consummation of their Hopes in the Everlasting Enjoyment of Himself. So that, if they do but duly consider the wretched and most debasing Servitude of Sin ; the impetuous Fury of disorder'd Passions, and unbridl'd Appetites ; the insupportable Vassalage of Satan, who claims an absolute Power over Mankind as His Prisoners of War ; the strong Allurements of Sensitive Pleasures, which are prone to inchant the Superior Faculties, so as to stifle all Desires of Liberty ; the disquieting Strokes of that just Accuser in their own Bosoms, whom they can neither silence nor escape ; the anxious Fears of Death, and those accumulated *Treasures of Wrath to come* : This cannot but inspire their Souls with a noble and vigorous Activity ; and raise the languid Affections to sincere and ardent, tho' disproportion'd, Returns of Love Obedience and Resignation to that immense Fountain of Goodness and Mercy, which has, at so Dear a Rate, accomplish'd their Deliverance, and purchas'd, by a nobler Title than that of Creation, an absolute Sovereignty over them. And when

when they consider further, the *Easy Yoke* which He enjoyns; even such as is the most perfect Freedom to a rectify'd Mind; together with the Happy Consequents, of a solid and well-grounded Peace, Soundness of Judgment, Conquest of all irregular Passions, Pardon of all involuntary Failings, Contempt of the World, and a full Assurance of being *for ever with Him* at the End of a very short and uncertain Life; this will necessarily lead them to contemplate, with the profoundest Humility and Gratitude, the amazing Wonders and special Endearments of His Love.

THEREFORE, from that Glorious Combination of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, which shines thro' the whole Oeconomy of Man's Salvation, as it is Reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures, (and which those *Blessed Spirits* above, who continually encompass the Heavenly Throne, *desire to look farther into;*) it is but a Reasonable Inference, That they, for whom so much has been done, and such mighty Things are yet in Reserve, should earnestly employ their most unclouded Thoughts in studying to know



and understand it more fully. As this Kind of Pursuit after Knowledge, is the Noblest Employment upon Earth, and beyond Comparison, the most profitable; so 'tis attended with the truest, the most solid and satisfactory Pleasure, and differs only in the Degree, from what shall be enjoy'd in the Other World: Because it affords the Brightest Discovery of the Supreme GOOD; and displays such an infinite Variety of the most ravishing Ideas, such an inexhaustible Fulness and Immensity, as is more than sufficient to satisfy the most enlarg'd Desires. In all other Kinds of Science, whether Speculative or Practical, there is some Allay of Uncertainty or Defect, to pall the Appetite, and render the Satisfaction incompleat; verifying that well known Observation of the best qualified Judge, — *He that increaseth Knowledge, increaseth Sorrow*: q. d.

“ The greater Pitch a Man arrives at,  
 “ the more sensibly he is affected with  
 “ the Unsuitableness and Insufficiency of  
 “ such Knowledge, both to supply his Defects,  
 “ and to satisfy his Desires: ” And this will the rather appear, if we consider that such Knowledge is at best but calculated for the Meridian of this Life, and makes



makes no Provision for Death or Eternity. But, to study and contemplate the Evangelical Doctrine of Salvation, and the adorable Attributes of the Supreme BEING, therein eminently display'd, is far other-wise ! 'Tis *the Word of Truth, which came down from Heaven*; and is alone sufficient both to shew us the Right Way, and bring us safely thither. By its Happy and Wonderful Effects, it carries a convincing Evidence of its Divine Original, to all such as are not wilfully harden'd in their unreasonable Enmity and Prejudice against it : And however Men, of perverse, weak, or ignorant Minds may err in their Opinions about it, 'tis always the same ; being Unchangeable as its Blessed Author and Glorious Object. The Knowledge which it imparts to every Sincere Humble and Unprejudic'd Person, is answerable to its Great and Excellent End ; and therefore does not consist in Speculative Notions, in empty Theory, or uncertain Opinions, but in the most clear, solid, and satisfactory Apprehension ; such as is every way suited to the Dignity of a Reasonable Mind. Whilst other Kinds of inferior Study inform the Understanding, but have little or no Tendency  
to

to improve, adorn, or purify the Soul; This inspires it with a superlative Love of GOD, with a just Abhorrence of whatsoever is contrary to His Holy Nature and Will, and a constant, uniform, and delightful Conformity to the Divine Image. Hereby the wandring Thoughts are most happily fix'd, and best secur'd against the infinite Variety of irregular Excursions. For, as the Mind is usually perplex'd with endless Disquiet in its over curious, or too eager Pursuit of other unprofitable, or less useful Enquiries; in This, it returns to its proper Rest; like the wearied Dove, to that protecting Ark from whence she came; or the wavering Needle, to its attractive Pole. With the highest Reason therefore, did that Learned *Apostle*, who was so great a Proficient in other, tho' the better Sort of Studies, *determine to know Nothing, comparatively, save JESUS CHRIST, and Him Crucified*: And he lays it down as a most uncontrovertible Maxim, "That  
 " GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the  
 " World unto Himself: And, That Great  
 " is the Mystery of Godliness: GOD ma-  
 " nifested in the Flesh; justified in the  
 " Spirit; seen of Angels; preached unto  
 the

“ *the Gentiles; believed on in the World;*  
“ *received up to Glory.*”

FROM all that has been already said, it will evidently appear That the *Christian Institution* is the most pure and perfect, the most plain and rational, the most kind, condescending and advantageous, and therefore in all Respects the most Lovely and Desirable System of Divine Knowledge, Faith and Worship, that ever was or could possibly have been manifested to Mankind. 'Tis objectively, and in Substance, the same Religion which was profess'd in the Times of Earliest Antiquity, by the Holy *Patriarchs*, and Others who were most eminent for Piety upon Sacred Record; tho' it has been since, more clearly reveal'd, explain'd, and improv'd to the highest Perfection, by the Personal Appearance, the infinite Wisdom, and the Divine Authority of the Blessed *Messiah* Himself; who was both the Unchangeable Author and Finisher of it. 'Tis a Religion abundantly confirm'd by the most unquestionable Miracles that the World ever saw; eminently seal'd by the Blood of innumerable Holy *Martyrs* and *Confessors*;



*fessors*; and visibly attended with the singular Care and Providence of the Almighty, in its Continuance and happy Progress throughout all Ages, against the utmost Malice and Opposition of all the Powers of Darkness. In Summ: 'Tis a Religion perfectly agreeable to the rectified Reason and Understanding, as well as the highest Interests of Mankind; as it is the only sure Foundation of our Faith and Hope: And even in those Sublimest Mysteries which we cannot at present explicitly comprehend, it furnishes us with solid Grounds of the most humble and thankful Assent, from the infallible Testimony of Divine Wisdom and Truth. For, so far as any Man attains to a right Knowledge of himself, he cannot but be sensible that the narrow Limits of a Finite Understanding can be no adequate Means for the Comprehension of an Infinite and Eternal Mind: And that the Honour of our Obedience to a Divine Testimony, and of our Regard to its Authority, is far more apparent in Matters above our present Reach, than to Believe only such Truths as are evident in themselves: Since by the One, we give God the Glory of His Attributes,

butes, but by the Other we unworthily assume a Self-sufficiency altogether unsuitable to Dependent Beings. And, indeed, we must give up all right Notions of Religion, of our own Frailty, and of our Dependance on the Supernatural Aids of Divine Grace, if we do not esteem ourselves as much oblig'd to believe what GOD has reveal'd of Himself, upon His own Authority, against the Opposition of our Carnal Minds, and the Dictates of our deprav'd Reason; as we are, to obey His Commands, notwithstanding the Aversion of our corrupt Wills, and the Strength of our vicious Inclinations. It will then necessarily follow, " That  
" every One who has enjoy'd *This Divine Revelation* (a Blessing so Delightful in it self, and so infinitely superior to all the lower Comforts, the empty, transient, and deceitful Gratifications of this Life) and yet, thro' an unaccountable Obstinacy and Perverseness of Mind, can be so deeply infatuated as to contemn, disparage, and wilfully reject it; is of all Reasonable Beings the most intirely miserable, and even the most abject and forlorn Part of the whole Creation. And, whilst he is

“all this, and whatsoever else can come  
“within the Notion of Misery, to him-  
“self; he is further the most ungenerous,  
“inhuman, unsociable and barbarous, be-  
“yond Expression, to his Fellow-Crea-  
“tures; so far as he endeavours by sly  
“and artful Insinuations to draw them  
“into the same deplorable Way of Think-  
“ing, and consequently to rob them of  
“the Only solid Comfort, Serenity and  
“Satisfaction, which can either make a  
“Prosperous State Happy, or be a suffici-  
“ent Balance to the numberless Crosses,  
“Troubles and Afflictions in this World.”

Man is, in himself, *i. e.* whilst he has any regard to the Primary Laws of his own Nature, and will suffer Reason to retain its just Prerogative, too Noble a Creature to confine his Views, Desires, and Hopes, within the narrow Compass of Time, or any Kind of Good, whether real or imaginary, which is subject to Extinction, Interruption or Change. He has that within him, which, if it be faithfully consulted and suffer'd to speak, will readily assure him that he is born with the evident and indelible Characters of an Immortal Nature; as he is endu'd with a Capacity of Reasoning, Determining and

Choosing



Choosing for himself, and tho' a Voluntary *Agent*, yet still accountable to that Blessed Original which both gave and continually upholds him in Being: And further, that the Relation which he, as Creature bears to GOD, obliges him to make all possible Returns of a Dutiful Acknowledgment, and Obedience to His Reveal'd Will. When Reason and Human Liberty thus happily recover their due Rectitude, they are the chief Glory and the brightest Ornament of Moral or Intellectual *Agents*; as they bear an exact Correspondence to those unchangeable Laws of universal Righteousness, Goodness and Truth, which are Essential Properties of the Divine Nature. But if any should plead for such a Freedom of the Will as includes a Power of doing Wrong as well as Right, they usurp a Prerogative beyond that of the Supreme BEING: For such a Power is not to be found in GOD Himself, and consequently cannot belong to any Creature. What GOD has graciously condescended to reveal unto Mankind, concerning the Sacred Harmony of His Glorious Attributes, in the wonderful Means of expiating their Guilt, and in declaring the Way and Manner how, and

the Only Terms upon which they may be assur'd of a full and perfect Remission of their Sins, and an Admittance into His Favour; is indeed invaluable in it self, and so perfectly agreeable to the Dictates of unprejudic'd Reason, as well as to their highest Interest, that it richly deserves the most affecting Acknowledgments of Gratitude and Praise, and affords Matter of great Astonishment that Any, who rank themselves among Reasonable Creatures, should stagger at the Belief of it. In as much as no Human Wisdom, nor even the most penetrating Capacity of Angelical Beings, could possibly conceive an adequate Means of effecting so desirable an End; GOD was graciously pleas'd to comfort and support Mankind upon their first voluntary Deviation, by an early Promise of such an effectual Remedy, to be manifested in His own appointed Time, and both to give them much clearer repeated Assurances, as well as Distinguishing Marks for their intire Satisfaction, as that Blessed Time drew near; and, at last, to effect it, under the Gospel Revelation, in a very full and perfect Manner, agreeable to their highest Wishes, Expectations and Hopes.

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He has given them the strongest Evidence which could possibly be imparted to Reasonable Minds, that He is not only reconcilable, but most willing and forward to pardon their Transgressions, and to receive them into Favour, upon the mild and merciful Terms of their Repentance, and Faith in that Blessed *Mediator* whom He has manifested to be the Only *Way, the Truth and the Life*. And He has further condescended to assure them of His great Readiness, by the special Aids of His Grace, in Concurrence with their own Free-Choice and Endeavours, to bestow on them those very Qualifications which He requires. Certainly, these are Terms suitable to the weak and imperfect State of Human Nature, and such as cannot but be esteem'd the most highly delightful and endearing in themselves; such as the free and impartial Use of every Man's Reason would induce him thankfully to believe, accept and embrace; and such as Nothing but a predominant Pride, or Slavery to Sensual Appetites, or a perverse Disposition of Mind could prompt any One to dislike or esteem unreasonable, if they had not been enjoyn'd. Such is the distinguishing Grace and Mercy, and  
such



such the peculiar Encouragement of the Evangelical Doctrine: Wherein G O D has shewn Himself infinitely more ready to do us Good, than we are, or can be, to ask it of Him; and has given us the fullest Assurance imaginable that He will not fail of effecting our Final Happiness, if we do not wilfully put an Obstacle to it our selves.

AND now, how Happy would it be, if those Miserable and Infatuated Persons, who have hitherto slighted that invaluable Blessing of the Holy Scriptures, wherein the Sacred Harmony of the Divine Attributes, in appointing the Only Way, Means, and Conditions of Man's Salvation, are plainly reveal'd, would be so Wise and so Just to themselves, as to lay aside their Unreasonable Prejudice, and to read, weigh, and consider them impartially; with such an awful Regard as is suitable to their Nature and Worth. They would then, most readily acknowledge, and thankfully admire the unsearchable Depths of that infinite Wisdom and Goodness which shine thro' the whole Wonderful Divine Oeconomy of Designing and effecting the Ultimate Happiness of

of Rational Beings. They would then, be easily convinc'd of the Pride and Rashness; the stupendious Folly and Presumption of their past Conduct; and be forward enough to Humble themselves and Repent: They would \* *look unto Him whom they have pierced, and mourn*; and thankfully lay hold on the Sceptre of His Grace, whilst it is offer'd to them. Why should Any be so Unkind, so Unjust and so Cruel to their own Souls, as to exclude themselves wilfully from the Comforts of Religion in This Life, and the Glorious Rewards of it in the Next; when GOD has not excluded them? Nay, when He has so pathetically assur'd them of His earnest Desire, that They † *should turn from their Wickedness and live*: And that His Mercy and Pardon are so extensive, as to reach every Kind and Degree of Sin, when it is truly repented of, and forsaken? The Extended Arms of the Gracious REDEEMER, are always ready to embrace every Humble Penitent; who, in good Earnest, flees

\* Zech. xii. 10.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

flees \* for Refuge to that Strong Consolation and Hope, which He has set before them. 'Twas a Part of His special Commission, That the Offers of Evangelical Grace should † begin at Jerusalem; i. e. with those who had stubbornly slighted His Miracles, contemptuously rejected His Doctrine, and been the Cruel Instruments of His Sufferings. He has given the fullest Assurance imaginable, That || Every One who believes in Him, shall not perish, but have Everlasting Life: And that ‡ He will in no wise reject such as truly come unto Him. Why then, should any One, to whom these Kind and Endearing Invitations are made, either thro' Pride and Obstinacy, or thro' Fear and Despondence, neglect to have Recourse to Him, in whom all the Treasures of the Divine Love are laid open to Mankind? Why should they not be ready, to embrace, with Joy and Thankfulness, those Great and Glorious Privileges which He has purchas'd, and is desirous to confer on them?

\* Heb. vi. 18.

|| John iii. 16.

† Luke xxiv. 47.

‡ Ibid. vi. 37.



them? Why should they entertain such Low and Undervaluing Thoughts of the Merits of His Atoning Sacrifice; which are infinitely greater than the Sins of Men, and the Only Means whereby They can be expiated? And why should they cast away those precious Souls, whom He has shewn Himself so Desirous to save from their Sins, and from the Everlasting Punishment due to them; whose Eternal Happiness He has purchas'd at so dear a Rate, and is ready to insure to them, on the Easy, Equitable and Merciful Terms of an Obedient Faith in Him? Certain it is, That there are no Obstacles, no Difficulties or Discouragements, but what arise on Man's Part. But if, notwithstanding all these amazing Instances of the Divine Goodness and Condescension, Men will persist in a Contemptuous Disbelief, or a Careless Neglect of those Heavenly Doctrines and Rules of Life, which are so clearly reveal'd and enjoyn'd them; then all those exceeding great and invaluable Advantages will not only be lost upon them, but will unavoidably add a much heavier Weight to their Condemnation;

B b

and

and render their Punishment more insupportable than that of the Greatest Sinners, who never enjoy'd any other Means of Divine Knowledge than the Light and Law of Nature.





## Of INFIDELITY in PRACTICE.



**P**RACTICAL ATHEISM is likewise no less Dangerous than *Speculative*: In some Respects 'tis more inexcusable; and indeed equally Damning in its Tendency and Effects. This is altogether as Unreasonable and highly provoking to the Divine Purity, as the Other is Impious and Absurd: But, from the Unhappy Influence which it has upon Others, to draw them into the same Licentious Habits, and a careless Neglect of the Duties of Religion, This seems to merit the severer Punishment, if any Difference shall be assign'd them. 'Tis most certainly a Sin of a very high Nature, and so full of Ingratitude, that 'twill admit of no Palliation



or Excuse, in those who have not only enjoy'd the inestimable Blessing of the *Written Word of GOD*, but by the most solemn Engagements testified their Assent to the Conditions of the *Gospel Covenant*. A sound Faith in the All-sufficient Merits of *JESUS CHRIST*, and in the Evangelical Promises made and establish'd in Him, is indeed the Foundation of our Acceptance with *GOD*, and of our Title to Eternal Blessedness: But then, Actual Obedience and Holiness of Life, is the proper Fruit, and the only Evidence of such Faith; without which, it is no better than a mere empty Notion, or (as *St. James* expresses it) altogether Dead, Useless and Insignificant. If we are never so Orthodox in Principles, 'twill but little avail us, unless our Practice be answerable thereunto: Nay, our *SAVIOUR* has plainly intimated, That this will rather help to aggravate our Condemnation, when He speaks of a severer Degree of Punishment reserv'd for those Careless and Unprofitable Servants, \* *who knew, and profess'd to obey, their Master's Will, and yet did it not*: And, from the

\* Luke xii. 47.

the *Parable of the Talents*, He has further taught us, That GOD's Expectations of Obedience from Mankind, will be proportionable to the Means of Knowledge, the different Degrees of Capacity, and the special Aids of His Grace which He has afforded them. To be stupid, and insensible of the Frame and Temper of our own Hearts; to sink down into Sensuality, or into the vile Drudgery of an Earthy Mind; and to be regardless in the Matters of Religion, and in the Great Affairs of Eternity; is, to live always in a kind of Spiritual Lethargy, which is no less Dangerous to the Soul, than the other is to the Body. Therefore St. Paul gives a very affecting Description of the Deplorable Case of those Negligent and Unfruitful Christians, who, \* *Having tasted the good Word of GOD, and the Powers of the World to come*, [i. e. having long enjoy'd the Means of Grace and Salvation, with some lively Sense and Conviction of the great Weight and Worth of them] yet never come to bring forth any Fruit answerable in their Lives: And He further insinuates, That, by these Advantages,

\* Heb. vi. 5, 6.

tages, thus slighted and neglected, they will heap up to themselves a greater Weight of Divine Vengeance, in the Dreadful Day of Account; when He compares them to Barren Ground, which no Rain can soften, or make Fruitful; such as brings forth nothing but \* *Briars and Thorns, whose End is to be burned.* Elsewhere, he speaks of such as † *held the Truth in Unrighteousness*; and || *profess'd that they knew GOD, but in Works deny'd Him*: And what more Dismal Character is it possible for any Man to lie under; unless, by solemn Dedication, he became a sworn Factor to the Devil? What Arguments can such Persons use, to convince or persuade the Unbelieving Part of Mankind, that there is any Thing truly Amiable and Attractive in the Ways of Christianity, or in Moral Vertue and Goodness; Or, to win them over to a Practical Belief and Acknowledgment of the Being and Attributes of GOD; whilst they can satisfy themselves to live as if they thought there was none? Thus ‡ *the Ways of Zion mourn*: Religion is expos'd to Indignity

\* Heb. vi. 8,

|| Tit. i. 16.

† Rom. i. 18.

‡ Lam. i. 4.



dignity and Contempt; and its Glorious Author is continually \* *wounded in the House of His Titular Friends*: Which is far worse than all the design'd Affronts that He receives from the most inveterate Enemies. Yet this Dreadful Contagion is apt to steal upon Multitudes of Christians insensibly, thro' a pleasing Growth of Vicious Habits; whilst they can easily take up with a few general Notions, with Cold and Transient Thoughts, and a Lazy Indifference in Matters of the highest Concernment. If the real Danger, in respect of themselves and others, were but duly apprehended; such as are Well-wishers to Religion, and to the Common Good of Mankind, would not take so great a Liberty in Sporting with Profaneness, and boldly venturing on the Borders of *Atheism*, as is too often visible in some, who would take it very ill to be question'd for their *Orthodoxy* in Opinion.

NOTHING is more certain, than That the Purest Church in the World cannot save a Wicked Man; *i. e.* One, who in the general Course and Conduct of

\* Zech. xiii. 6.

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of his Life, chooses and continues to be such. Religion, if it be any Thing, so as to answer its Excellent End, must be a Governing Principle: And all they, who lay Claim to the inestimable Benefits and Privileges of it, are highly concern'd to deal faithfully with themselves in a Matter of so Vast Importance. They would therefore do well to ask themselves seriously and impartially, Whether their Belief of the Great Principles of Christianity, of the Being and Attributes of GOD, of the Divine Authority of His Holy Word, and of the Promises and Threatnings therein contain'd, be so truly Awful and Prevalent, as to influence the general Course of their Lives and Actions? Whether it teaches them Humility, Gratitude, Resignation and Dependance; so as to regulate their Love to, and Solitude for all inferior Comforts with a becoming Moderation; and do \* *commit their Souls to Him, in a constant Course of Well-doing, as unto a Faithful Creator?* Whether it prompts them, from a real Disposition of Mind, to Praise, Adore, and Love Him, as the most Desirable Good,

\* 1 Pet. iv. 19.

Good; To esteem \* *His Favour better than Life*, and carefully to avoid whatsoever is Displeasing to Him: To delight in the Practice of Vertue and Universal Goodness, and to encourage it in Others, because it is an eminent Part of His Likeness, and an indispensable Ornament of a Rational Soul? Whether it makes them equally Cautious and Vigilant against the most Secret, as against those Open Sins which incur the Censure of Men? Whether it inspires them with a zealous Concern for His Name, Honour, and Service, and for the Common Interests of Religion, in the World? With a due Veneration for His Sacred Word, and a just Regard to the admirable Method and establish'd Conditions of Salvation, therein Reveal'd; notwithstanding all the Contradictions of Profligate Men, and the Bitter Reproaches of Infidels? In a Word: Whether it makes them truly Serious, Regular, and Constant in all the Practical Duties of Religion; Faithful and Consciencious in all their Temporal Concerns; and Instrumental, by Exemplary Vertue and Sobriety,

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\* Psal. lxiii. 3.



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briety, to correct the Vices of a Dissolute Age?

WHAT Advantage can it be to us, That JESUS CHRIST was born into the World; that *He went about doing Good*, to the Bodies and Souls of Men; and, by His perfect Obedience and Sufferings, purchas'd Eternal Life for All that believe and obey his GOSPEL; if we remain Enemies to His Crown and Dignity, and crucify Him afresh, by cherishing those Sinful Habits which He came on Purpose to deliver us from? Christianity deals with Mankind according to the peculiar Excellency of their Nature, as Free Agents, or as Rational and Intelligent Beings: It moves them by Hopes and Fears, or (as the Prophet *Hosea* expresses it) *draws them with the Cords of a Man, as well as with the Bands of Love*; representing Heaven and Eternal Happiness, not only as a Free Gift purchas'd by the infinite Merits of CHRIST, but also as the Reward of their own voluntary Choice, and delightful Obedience. The only Return which we are capable of making, for all that He has done and suffer'd for

for us on Earth, and for the continual Benefits of His Intercession in Heaven, is a lively Faith in the infinite Value and Efficacy of His Merits, and a thankful Obedience to His Laws. As this is the greatest Homage we can pay; so 'tis all that He requires at our Hands. *If ye love me, keep my Commandments*, was one of His last Injunctions upon Earth: And this is so highly acceptable to Him, that the Holy Prophet, upon that Account, says, *He shall see of the Travel of His Soul, and be satisfied*. But if we have no other Sense of the Benefits or Obligations of Christianity, than in the superficial Notion of a common Hereditary Right; if we have no Experience of its proper Effects, to change the corrupt Bent of our Minds, and conform our Lives and Actions, in some real tho' imperfect Degree, to the Heavenly Author of that Excellent Institution; if we have contributed nothing to the common Service of Religion, but rather lessen'd its Interest and Reputation in the World, and by a careless or dissolute Behaviour, reflected a Disparagement on its Holy Ways; we then bear the Name of Christians to our greater Con-

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demnation

demnation, and the inestimable Privileges of the G O S P E L, tho' the greatest Blessing on Earth, will at last lie heavy upon our Hands, as an insupportable Weight, when the Great Distributor of these Talents shall appear to take a general Account of them. Whatsoever therefore, the careless Pretenders to Christianity may imagine, there will come a Time when they shall be terribly convinc'd that Coldness and Indifferency in Religion, after a long continu'd Course of the Divine Goodness, Patience and Condescension, not only reflects the most shameful Ingratitude, unbecoming Reasonable Creatures, but is utterly inconsistent with any just Pretensions to the Thing it self. For, if *the Ways thereof are Pleasantness, and all its Paths are Peace*; if the natural Tendency of it, is to *purify the Heart by Faith*; to teach Men the most ennobling Habits of universal Piety and Vertue, and to *live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World*; then such Degenerate Minds as can prefer the low and fleeting Gratifications of the Sensitive Appetite, or become wholly immers'd in the Love and Pursuit of earthly Things (tho' neither



neither Guilt nor Punishment were the Consequence) may well be thought, if St. Peter was a Competent Judge, to have no Part or Lot in this important Matter, but to remain *in the very Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity*. 'Tis, indeed, possible for a Man to obtain a Notional Belief of GOD, and of the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Religion, and yet be not only void of all true Piety, but profane, and an open Scandal to the Religion which he professes. Yet this cannot be without debauching his Reason, stifling his Conscience, and resisting the clearest Convictions of his own Mind: So that he would act with much more Consistence, if he became a down-right *Atheist*, and deny'd a Supreme BEING, than to contradict his Principles by his Practice, so far as, both to acknowledge and affront Him at the same Time. Nor can it be reasonably thought a less Provocation to the Divine Majesty, that Men should utterly deny His Existence, and banish all Notions concerning Him, than that they should in Words confess an Acknowledgment of His infinite Being, and inseparable Attributes, and yet, in the

the general Course of their Lives and Actions, reflect the highest Indignities and the greatest Disparagement on His Name, Honour, and Worship in the World. If any Man therefore, can once come to satisfy himself in so unworthy a Behaviour towards GOD and Religion, as to lead a profane and dissolute Life, he cannot reasonably complain of Injustice, if he be suspected or censur'd as deeply tainted with Atheistical Sentiments; tho', for his Credit, he may think fit to conceal or disown them. For certain it is, That such an One must have put off all true Sense, not only of Reveal'd Religion, but of Natural too: Since the latter, if it be duly regarded, will lead him to believe in, and acknowledge GOD as the most Perfect and Excellent BEING; and that Love and Reverence, Adoration and Praise, joyn'd with a constant and delightful Respect to His imitable Perfections, are indispensably due to Him from all Reasonable Creatures. But, by so much the more as the *Christian* Revelation has explain'd, improv'd, and heighten'd the Obligations of Natural Religion, and taught Mankind a much clearer Know-  
ledge

ledge of the Holy Nature and Will of GOD, and of the merciful Terms of their Reconciliation and Acceptance with Him; it has oblig'd them to more eminent Degrees of Love, Gratitude, and universal Holiness, both in the Mind and Affections, and in the outward Conversation; That they may *shine as Lights in the World*; and, being *renew'd after His Image*, may exalt *the abundant Riches of His Grace and Glory thro' JESUS CHRIST*. And since they are now no longer left to the weak and imperfect Guidance of mere Natural Reason, or to the difficult and obscure Precepts of the *Jewish* Oeconomy; but, in the plainest Manner, instructed in the Knowledge of their universal Duty, and of the only true and acceptable Way of Religious Worship which GOD requires: Since those Duties themselves are highly reasonable, advantageous, and encouraging; every way worthy of their Supreme Lawgiver; attended with Divine Aids in the Performance; with gracious Allowances for Human Imperfections; and with an Assurance of an Eternal Reward, inconceivably Great and Glorious: How can they answer for a cold Indifference, and especially



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especially for a contemptuous Disregard of such astonishing Mercy and Goodness? *How can they think to escape, if they persist in neglecting the Offers of so great Salvation?*

THE Licentious and Immoral Lives of Christians reflect the greatest Disparagement on that most Holy and Excellent Institution; which eminently tends to purify and perfect Human Nature. This gives a much greater Advantage to the profess'd Enemies of it, than they could ever yet gain by all their united Arguments: For these appear no better than a thin Varnish, which is easily seen through; but the other seems to have some Weight, and is not so readily hit off, tho' 'tis in Reality no justifiable Ground of Prejudice to any One. Such Advantage is the greater, as those Immoralities appear in Persons eminent for Rank, Authority, and high Stations in the World. The Examples of such, are apt to have a mighty Influence on the Lives and Manners of those who act in much lower Spheres: So that their Conduct, whenever they take such an unhappy Turn, as to become the Patrons  
of

of Vice, or Contemners of Reveald Religion, is like to draw Multitudes after them; and consequently, to bring upon themselves a much heavier Weight of Guilt than their own Personal Failings, in the Great Day of Account: Whereas, on the contrary, 'tis in their Power, above others, and certainly ought to be always in their Inclinations, to contribute very much, by their own shining Examples, towards the Reforming of a Corrupt and Degenerate Age; and to restore the Amiable Habits of Christian Piety and Vertue to their just Veneration and Esteem. Whilst the Conduct of the *Civil Magistrate* is thus duly season'd with Religion and Exemplary Vertues, 'twill not fail of adding a greater Weight to his Authority, and Commanding that Awful Regard, even from the most Loose and Profligate, which is due to his Character: But, if they, who are to reclaim Others, should be so unguarded, as to fall into the same Enormities which they are bound to punish; 'twould be no Wonder, if they prove the unhappy Instruments of propagating Vice, and of sinking Magistracy it self into Contempt; so as to render it ineffectual

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for the answering of its Excellent Ends. Certain it is, That the Best Step towards a Reformation in the Vulgar Sort, and far more effectual than the Force of all Penal Laws (tho' these are become, in a great Measure Useless, thro' Neglect) would be a general Observance of it in those of Higher Rank: Which is not only their Highest Honour in this World, and infinitely Superior to that Distinction which they now bear from others, but will intitle them, as Instruments of \* *Turning Many to Righteousness*, to the Brightest Splendor in the Regions of Glory.

As to other Christians in general. It highly concerns every One, both with regard to themselves, and to the Common Interests of Religion, to live answerably to those Eminent Means of Knowledge and Edification which they enjoy: Otherwise, 'twill be very far from any Advantage to them, that they have been Members of the Best-Constituted Church upon Earth; if they do not truly endeavour, according to  
that

\* Dan. xii. 3.

that Apostolical Injunction \* *to adorn the Gospel of their Blessed Lord and Saviour in all Things.* GOD has not left us, as He has many other Large and Populous Nations, to the imperfect Light, and uncertain Guidance of our Natural and Depraved Reason; neither has He given us the Intimations of His Holy Will, under a Veil of dark Types and Shadows, as He did to the *Jews*; but He has graciously afforded us the most Clear and Perfect Revelation of what we are to Believe and Obey, that ever was vouchsaf'd to the World. He has display'd before us the Sacred Harmony of His Glorious Attributes and Adorable Perfections, as the sure Ground of our Hope, Consolation and Dependance. He has represented Himself as Infinite in Wisdom and Holiness, in Majesty and Goodness, in Power and Mercy, in Truth and Faithfulness; as an irreconcilable Hater of Sin, and an Universal Lover of Mankind. He has condescended to set before us the Only adequate Means for the Expiation both of our Original and Actual Defilements, and for our perfect

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\* Tit. ii. 10.



Readmission to His Unchangeable and Everlasting Favour: He has given us very full and plain Directions in what immediately relates to His Worship, and the most perfect Rules of an Holy Life, suited to the Reason and Apprehension of the meanest Capacities; and enforc'd with the most powerful Motives, taken from the Eternal Rewards and Punishments of another World. The invaluable Blessing of this Divine Revelation, is not with-held from any of us, nor intermixt with the vain Traditions and Inventions of Men; but we enjoy it Whole and Intire, Sincere and Uncorrupted. So that, after such Great and Eminent Advantages of Knowing and Doing the Will of GOD, not only the Contempt, but the careless Neglect of it, must needs leave us altogether inexcusable, and highly aggravate our Condemnation. The many Flagrant Vices, and Idolatrous Conceptions which reign'd in the *Heathen* World, before the Glorious Dawn of Evangelical Light, and which yet abound in those Unhappy Places that still remain ignorant of it; will be easily pardon'd, in Comparison of the Scandalous and Immoral Lives

Lives of profess'd Christians: For \* *the Times of that Ignorance* GOD winked at [*ὑπεδιδόν*, He overlook'd]; but now He hath commanded all Men, whom that Blessed Dispensation has reach'd, to Repent, Believe, and Obey it. Every Degree of Heavenly Light and Knowledge which GOD has imparted, will be an Aggravation of the Sins committed against it; since it cannot but proceed from a great deal of Wilfulness and Contempt: And, as this will intitle every such Careless and Disobedient Christian, to that sorer Punishment of the Presumptuous and Negligent Servant, who knew, and yet regarded not his Master's Will; so it would have † *been much better for them, not to have known the Way of Righteousness*, (but to have been Born, and liv'd always in some remote Heathen Country) than, after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment deliver'd unto them. Therefore, since the Duty and Danger of all Christians is such: And since the Obligations, arising from those Means and Opportunities of Improvement which  
GOD

\* Acts xvii. 30.

† 2 Pet. ii. 21.

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GOD has put into their Hands, are so strong and cogent: It must needs be a Matter of the highest Importance of any Thing in this World, to consider often, with a becoming Seriousness and Application of Mind, \* *What manner of Persons they ought to be, in all Holy Conversation and Godliness †; Looking always for that Blessed Hope, and the Glorious Appearance of the Great GOD, and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST: That, when He shall come again, invested with Divine Power and Majesty, to put an End to the present State and Being of this World, and || to Judge all Mankind in Righteousness, ‡ they may be found of Him, in Peace, without Spot and Blameless.*

'TIS then Evident, beyond all Contradiction, That the Fear and Love of GOD, and Obedient Conformity to His Reveal'd Will, is the highest End of Reasonable Beings: And, that Religion, how meanly soever some may think of it, is a Matter of too Vast a Consequence, to be either trifled with, or subjected to any

\* 2 Pet. iii. 11.

|| Acts xvii. 31.

† Tit. ii. 13.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 14.



any of the Alterations of the Times, Manners, and Fashions of this World; being Unchangeable, as its Blessed Author, who is \* *the same Yesterday, to Day, and for Ever.* This, in a Comparative Sense, is the only Valuable and Certain Treasure which we can at present attain to. For all other Enjoyments, which are suited either to our necessary Accommodation, or to gratify the Deprav'd Taste of the lower Animal Life, will soon leave us of themselves, or we shall unavoidably be remov'd from them: But this is an Everlasting Possession; which will abide with us as a Faithful Friend to the last Period of Life, and pass over with us into the other World. Under the sensible Decays of Nature, 'twill impart Life and Vigor, Serenity and Comfort to the Possessor of it, when Age and Infirmities bow him down to his native Earth; and will not only render the Approaches of Death welcome and desirable, but in some Measure anticipate the Joys of Heaven. Will any One then, who has a just Value for himself, for the Glory of G O D, and for the Welfare of

\* Heb. xiii. 8.

of Mankind, be so far prevail'd upon by the thin and empty Appearances of any other present Gratifications, unsuitable to the true Dignity of his Nature, as to quit this only Solid and Substantial Happiness, without which, he would be the most miserable of all Creatures? Will he not rather choose, by a Regular and Unblameable Conversation, to recommend the true Pleasure and Amiability of a Religious Life, to the Giddy and Unthinking World; and to convince them of the Rashness and Folly of their mistaken Conduct; that he may thereby contribute, as far as possible, to the general Good of others? Religion, if it be consider'd in a Public Respect, is of the greatest Efficacy to procure National Blessings, and to promote the Common Good of Human Society. For the Doctrine of CHRIST is not only productive of true Holiness in the Hearts and Lives of all those who sincerely Believe and Obey it; but it has an equal Tendency to restore and establish Universal Peace, Unanimity, and Love among All who are Sharers in the Common Benefits of it. Nothing else is so powerful to give an Happy Turn to their  
Bitterest

Bitterest Passions; to soften their Prejudices, and unite their Affections: In so much, that if it were universally obey'd, it would soon cause this Lower World once more to shine out into a perfect Paradise. And, as to every particular Person; 'tis the only Expedient for a safe and comfortable Passage thro' all the troublesome Changes of Time and Transitory Things. But, how Distant soever from such a Lovely and Desirable Prospect, the present Face of Religion may appear, the very Discouragements arising from an extremely Careless and Dissolute Age, should inspire every Serious and Considerate Christian with an higher Value for the Word of God, and for the abundant Consolation which it affords; with a zealous Concern for His Holy Name, Honour and Service, and for the Interests and Credit of Religion in the World. It should raise their Thoughts towards *the Things which are Unseen and Eternal*; and engage them more frequently in Contemplating the Adorable Perfections of Him who is infinitely \* *Fairer than the Children of*  
E e *Men;*

\* Psal. xlv. 2.



*Men*; of Him, who is the Essential Wisdom and \* *Glory of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* This will enable them to run, not only with Patience, but with a peculiar Alacrity and Delight, in the Ways of His Commandments; 'Twill help them so far to conquer their Exorbitant Passions and Affections, as to devote them to the Excellent Ends of Religion, and of an Holy Life: Which will afford such a Pleasure as Nothing else in this World can equal; such as bears some Resemblance of the Blessed State Above, and is no less than a Foretaste of Heaven upon Earth. In a Word: 'Twill fix their Minds in a pious and stedfast Resolution, joyn'd with the most diligent Care and Endeavours, to please God, by an Universal Obedience to His Will: So that, living in constant Preparation for their Latter End, they will have a comfortable Prospect into Eternity; and whensoever His Good Providence shall call them hence, will be always ready to finish their Course with Joy. Such was the Happy Conduct, and such the Consolation

\* John i. 14.

Consolation and Support of that Great and Eminent Apostle St. Paul: When the Reflexions on his past Life could assure him, That he had faithfully endeavour'd to promote the Honour and Service of his Blessed Lord and Master; That \* *with Simplicity and Godly Sincerity* he had govern'd his whole Conversation in the World; That he had † kept under his Body, and brought it into Subjection to the nobler Dictates of his Mind; and that || *the light and momentary Afflictions* which he sustain'd, would work out for him a far more exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory. And, being at last arriv'd at the Happy Close of his Life and Labours, he expresses himself in a pious Ecstasy of Joy, as if he was already possess'd of the Incorruptible Inheritance Above.—— \*\* *I am now ready to be offer'd up; and the Time of my Departure is at hand. I have fought a good Fight: I have finished my Course: I have kept the Faith. Hence-*

\* 2 Cor. i. 12.

† 2 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

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*Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness; which the LORD, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day: And not to me only, but unto all them also, that love and wait for His Appearing.*

**F I N I S.**

